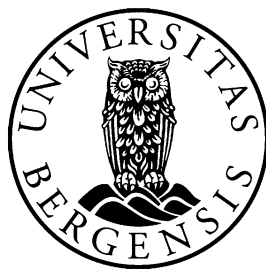


Threshold Zero

- On Heavy Metal's Positive Potentials in Music Therapy

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*It becomes like threshold zero for the music
and the type of cognitive thoughts one has while listening to it.*

It stops at a certain point.

*At that point you are given a choice
whether to stay there
or to find a solution.*

Hallgeir

Sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven tar for seg heavy metals positive postensiale. En omfattende literaturgjennomgang avslører en mangel på forskning på dette, noe som har inspirert til en kvalitativ studie som fokuserer på heavy metal som positiv resurs i en musikkterapeutisk kontekst. Datainnsamling foregår gjennom intervju av tre unge menn på henholdsvis 20, 22 og 26 år, som i løpet av ungdomstiden har opplevd heavy metal som noe viktig, om ikke avgjørende for deres mentale helse. Intervjuene undersøker forskjellige aspekter av dette og har stort fokus på informantenes egne erfaringer.

Intervjuene blir tolket og analysert i lys av teori som er valgt med utgangspunkt i forfatterens egen for forståelse. Det kommer frem at heavy metal kan ha vært mer enn kun et «image» eller underholdning. Informantene har brukt heavy metal som kilde til dype refleksjoner om dem selv og andre. Musikken har fungert som støtte i vanskelige tider gjennom empati og speiling, og har gitt dem en følelse av fellesskap.

Det diskuteres videre hvordan elementer hentet fra informantenes beskrivelser kan implementeres i en musikkterapeutisk kontekst. Det foreslås fire fokusområder for musikkterapeuter: tolkning av tekst, utforskning av emosjoner, utforskning av grenser, og kanalisering av energi. Med den terapeutiske relasjonen som sentralt element blant disse fokusområdene argumenteres det for hvordan heavy metal kan være en gunstig resurs i musikkterapi.

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1. Introduction

1. 1. Background for choosing a topic

As a musician and a soon-to-be music therapist I constantly strive towards keeping an open mind in relation to music. New emerging musical genres catch my curiosity, but also, I keep discovering music from the last five or six decades that fascinates me. In essence, I believe most music has a soul. That is most music that is not purely made for commercial purposes. I believe any musician truly mean what they sing and express through their music. Therefore I also believe that most music could and should be taken seriously. This master thesis approaches heavy metal, a musical genre that has not always had the best of reputations, despite it's growing number of fans.

Getting my music therapy training from an institution that focuses a lot on resource oriented music therapy, I have learned to look for resources everywhere and anywhere, including in heavy metal. The following thesis will therefore look at heavy metal as a positive resource for adolescents. It is important for me to state that I do not reject any negative sides of the music and that I understand that certain elements of it can give negative associations. I have deliberately looked for informants that have a positive relation to heavy metal and who have experienced the genre as life-changing in a positive way.

As a young adolescent I did what most youngsters do: copied my older siblings. My older brothers became my main musical influence and my first real music interest was hip hop. This gradually was accompanied by rock music and after a while more heavy rock music such as Nirvana, Metallica and The Smashing Pumpkins. At times, I remember only listening to the more heavy tracks, and not finding it heavy enough. This made me explore heavy metal genres and this got me access to music that gave me exactly what I «needed». Today, I still frequently enjoy heavy metal and I still explore new music in this field. My associations with heavy metal are very positive. I associate it with happy moments listening together with friends and singing along with the music, air-drumming and even head banging at times. Even today I might put on some heavy metal on a bright, happy summer day because it somehow amplifies the present emotions.

Throughout my study course I realized that heavy metal was a genre that was rarely mentioned, if mentioned at all, in music therapy literature. I did some research and found that most of the literature concerning heavy metal presents it as a source of depression, anxiety and other mental

problems. This discovery was contrary to my own experiences, resulting in the theme of this master thesis. Because there is very limited amounts of research on this topic, I have chosen to give the literature review a great deal of attention. I see the need for research on the positive sides of heavy metal and want to give a general overview of the existing literature relevant to it. Emerging from this came the idea of interviewing persons who have experienced heavy metal as a positive resource in their lives. Three interviews were carried out and analyzed with the aim of better understanding how and why they experienced heavy metal as something positive. By writing this thesis I hope to shed some light on a musical genre that it seems is met by a lot of prejudice.

1. 2. Research question

Knowing from my own experiences that heavy metal could be a positive resource in life, I wanted to examine in what ways this was possible. I also felt the need to make sure that I was not the only one having these experiences, and I was open for the possibility that there might be experiences very different from my own. From what I can see, the common way to present the research question is to show it as a result of the literature review. In my case the literature review was already commenced as a preparation task, and I had a certain idea of what the research question would be like. I would like to present the research question at this point because parts of the answers are in the literature review that follows this chapter. The first and main research question I would like to present is as follows:

How can heavy metal music be a positive resource in the lives of adolescents?

To make the project more relevant for my music therapy training and future as a music therapist I added the following question:

How can this be applied to music therapy?

These questions will hopefully contribute in the understanding of why some people have positive experiences and some have negative experiences from listening to heavy metal. They will also be partly answered in the literature review which gives me an opportunity to follow up my findings from the literature review, in the following chapters.

1. 3. Terms

I realize that some of the terms used in my research questions can have a vague or unclear meaning. To make these questions as understandable as possible, and to avoid any confusion regarding the terms, the following sections will deal with the most central terms in my questions in order to reveal their intended meaning.

1. 3. 1. Heavy Metal

The term heavy metal refers to a complex group of genres often also referred to as metal. This group of genres includes all metal sub-genres such as for example death metal, black metal, prog metal, viking metal, nu metal, djent, thrash metal and so forth (see McFadyen & Dunn, 2011 for a comprehensive overview). Heavy metal has a characteristic high energy level with distorted guitars and often yelling or «growling» vocals. When referring to heavy metal in this thesis I am primarily referring to the music, and not the culture that might be associated with it. An alternative term would be heavy music, or just metal. It is my impression that the term heavy metal to a great extent gives the right associations and demands little or no further explanation, and for this reason it is the one I chose.

1. 3. 2. Resource

The term resource here refers to a source of help or information, or an aid and security to fall back on (Ressurs, 2007). In this situation I would also like to add that it can be a resource to promote health, or to gain self-understanding.

1. 3. 3. Music Therapy

Music therapy has several different definitions. A widely used term is the one formulated by Bruscia (1998): «Music therapy is a systematic process of intervention wherein the therapist helps the client to promote health, using music experiences and the relationships that develop through them as systematic forces of change» (p. 20). Bruscia here suggests that an intervention is necessary, consisting of a therapist and a client, or a group of clients, for it to be music *therapy*. This is the definition I have kept in mind in my discussion and which I refer to when talking about music therapy.

2. Literature review

The literature review for this thesis was started one year before the rest of it as an independent paper. At that time I already knew what the topic for my master thesis would be, so I wrote a literature review entitled *Metal as a resource in a music therapy context*. This literature review forms the foundation for the one in the following chapter. Additional literature searches have been made throughout the writing process in order to stay up to date on literature and broaden the reach of my first search.

2. 1. Finding the literature

Several rounds of comprehensive searches were done over a period of two years using digital databases such as *Psycinfo* and *Rilm*. The words «music», «therapy», «heavy» and «metal» were used in the beginning and gave very limited results mainly related to heavy metal in a chemical context, or the use of metal objects in music therapy. Other relevant words such as «arousal», «effect» and «mental health» were added or used in various combinations to get more relevant hits. The available physical music therapy journals were also searched, giving minimal results. In the end what proved most efficient was to use the reference list of the most relevant literature. Also *Google Scholar* has been a great source of relevant material throughout the process. Some literature was also recommended by my supervisor or other researchers I have been in contact with through my studies.

Personal emailing was also a source of relevant material, including literature that was not yet published at the time. Combining all of the literature found through these various research methods I believe I have covered a great deal of literature on the topic. Because there was a limited amount of music therapy literature concerning heavy metal, a lot of the literature is from other fields such as psychology, pedagogy and mental health. Most of the literature concerning heavy metal also concerned adolescents, making it a natural match for my research questions.

It should be mentioned that I have come across much literature focusing on the rather negative sides of heavy metal and heavy metal culture. These are not being ignored nor rejected, but as my focus is on the potential positive qualities of heavy metal, the literature revealing negative aspects of the music are not that relevant, and I have thus chosen to only present a limited amount of it.

2. 2. Presentation of the literature

From the collection of relevant literature it seems that the research on heavy metal can be divided into four main categories. Research on *Mood regulation* and music is well documented by Katrina McFerran and her team in "How teenagers use music to manage their mood: An initial investigation" (McFerran, O'Grady & Sawyer, 2013). Also Frith (2009) and Gowensmith & Bloom (1997) have written relevant articles within music therapy on this topic, serving as the main framing literature in this chapter. Baker, Gleadhill and Dingle (2007) and Ahmadi (2009) were also of interest, and although the subjects of their research are more specific (substance abuse disorder and cancer patients) it seems that they are also relevant to more general settings.

A second category that stood out is *Heavy Metal and Mental Health*. This category is less represented by music therapy literature, but well represented in psychiatry and research on youth and adolescents. Amongst the mentioned literature are Baker & Bor, 2008; Recours, Aussagel & Trujillo, 2009; Stack, 1998; Arnett, 1991 and Lacourse, Claes & Villeneuve, 2001. As the open heading suggests, this is a category that has a lot of literature, even though most of it has a focus on the negative sides of the music.

McFerran (2014) presented 4 super-categories when investigating consequences of musical engagement for young people: «expressing identity», «impact mood», «promote coping» and «manage relationships». These categories are not very different from the ones I found independently from this article. The four main headings I ended up with are the following: «music and mood regulation», «heavy metal and mental health», «heavy metal and identity», and «heavy metal as catharsis». I chose a chapter dealing with heavy metal and mental health in general. I realize that certain chapters overlap, but in order to concentrate the literature concerning the mental health of heavy metal fans and other listeners in general, I chose to make it a heading of its own. I did not find «managing relationships» as an isolated topic, but I did find it present in most parts, and especially in «Music and Identity». This categorization was done to more easily get an overview of the literature found.

Into these four headings I have gathered the literature found standing out as most relevant for this thesis, and sorting it in order to get an overview and background knowledge for the further work. Each part will be introduced by a quote by a famous heavy metal artist, showing relevance to the findings of the literature.

2. 3. Heavy metal and mood regulation

It's outsider music to the max. Heavy metal solved a lot of my problems when I was a teenager. When I couldn't express my self or I was just frustrated I would go into my room and put on a metal album and feel instant relief.

– Kirk Hammett, Metallica (in McFadyen & Dunn, 2011)

Kirk Hammett experienced music as a relief in times of frustration. According to McFerran (2011) and Baker & Bor (2008) there is good reason to believe that he shares this kind of experience with many others. For adolescents in particular music plays a great role in "soundtracking" their lives by confirming or regulating moods. Galizio & Hendrick (1972) showed how music can intensify the emotional impact of lyrics: students listening to spoken lyrics accompanied by acoustic guitar were more emotionally aroused than those who heard the lyrics without accompaniment. If the lyrics were sung the emotional arousal was even more intense. It can be discussed whether the «growling» used in some metal sub-genres is a way of singing or a way of speaking dramatically, but it nevertheless seems that music is important for the emotional influence of lyrics.

Frith (2004) describes certain characteristic qualities that make music sound angry, several of which are common in heavy metal. Amongst qualities mentioned is the "noisiness" in the music, referred to as the busyness and intensity enhanced by simultaneous sounds and the use of effects such as delay and echo. Also the "growling" vocals and unresolved musical structures are qualities described by Frith as "angry". Referring to his own experiences from punk concerts in the 70s Frith suggests that despite the angry sound of the music, it rather makes us physiologically excited and buoyant. As an example of music that is more likely to evoke aggressive emotions, Frith mentions the more politically engaged music that focuses more on messages in the lyrics. Typically, this is music that does not sound angry, but that sheds light on political issues such as injustice. This music makes us angry through our own reasoning, affecting our sense of justice and empathy. Frith concludes by saying that the social circumstances rather than the type of music is what can make us angry, and that to a certain extent we as listeners can choose what the music means to us and what

we get from it. This again suggests that the anger already is present in an angry listener, and that the music confirms and supports the emotions rather than cause them.

McFerran, O'Grady, Grocke & Sawyer (2012) support this idea in their research on how teenagers use music to manage their moods. In their research 111 adolescents between the ages 15 and 18 reported if, and how they use music when feeling happy, angry, sad, bored or stressed. The results of their research show a: "(...) significant association between adolescents whose mental health was rated 'at risk' and a preference for heavy metal music" (McFerran et al., p. 101). This does not necessarily mean that heavy metal is the cause of their low mental health as not all the heavy metal fans showed a risk of developing psychological distress. A possible explanation is, as suggested above, that these individuals are attracted to this specific music *because* of their mental state. Also Gowensmith and Bloom (1997) support this and say that: "It seems plausible that heavy metal may be sought out by certain people as a way to identify with anger and frustration rather than causing such behavior" (p. 35). Roe (1985, referred to by McFerran, 2011) explains how music has reflexive qualities and that adolescents tend to use music as mirrors reflecting their own self-perception. In such a way music can also be used to reflect emotions and thereby allow the listener to see current emotions from a distance and thus get a better self-understanding and self-knowledge.

Wheeler (1985) found that music's influence on mood is related to the musical preference of the listener. Listeners who were in a good mood were in a less good mood after listening to music they did not like, and listeners in a bad mood were in a better mood after listening to music they liked. Gowensmith & Bloom (1997) tested the levels of arousal and anger in heavy metal fans and country fans when listening to heavy metal and country. The results show that even though heavy metal has the ability to cause higher levels of arousal in the listener, heavy metal fans are not angrier than country fans. The individual differences between the listeners are also being pointed out:

According to this study, heavy metal music does not have the same effect on all its listeners; similarly, not all heavy metal fans react similarly to heavy metal music. It seems plausible to speculate that unique factors within an individual interact with musical presentation so that reactions to music differ from listener to listener. Individual factors within the listener may interact with the music, causing a unique reaction, which is as dependent on attributes of the listener as it is on the music being played. (Gowensmith & Bloom, 1997, p. 43)

They go on suggesting that “perhaps the lives of the individual listeners should be examined more fully instead of placing primary responsibility on the music” (Gowensmith & Bloom 1997, p. 43). It could be interesting to see the results if home situation, family relationships, alcohol and drug use, and temperament were included and evaluated as indicators for each individual’s level of anger and arousal.

2. 4. Heavy metal and mental health

«Heavy metal is pushing your life to the maximum. Pushing it as hard as you can fucking get it on to the edge of chaos.»

- Sebastian Bach (in McFadyen & Dunn, 2011)

Lacourse, Claes & Villeneuve (2001) did a study where family relationships, social-psychological attitudes, drug use and suicidal risk of 275 adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18 were considered. The preference for heavy metal music was the main common point among these youth. The results show that the connection between heavy metal and suicidal risk is not significant. Interestingly the results also show a remarkable division between boys and girls. Girls who listened frequently to heavy metal music reported a higher suicidal risk and also higher feelings of alienation and anomie than girls who did not listen to heavy metal. Boys on the other hand showed no difference from their same sex peers. The authors suggest that this might be explained by a greater social acceptance of boys listening to heavy metal than the social acceptance associated with girls listening to it.

Also music listening for vicarious release showed different results for boys and girls. As expected by the authors, the girls who used music to release difficult emotions had feelings of alienation and anomie and poor family relationships. This was not the case for boys as the “(...) boys who listen to music for vicarious release reported a higher quality of relationship with both parents and reported using fewer drugs” (Lacourse et al., p. 330). Even though there is no significant link between the boys’ higher quality of relationship with parents and less drug-use, and being a heavy metal fan, this could suggest that there are positive effects of listening to heavy metal.

Recours, Aussagel & Trujillo (2009) investigated the relationship between mental health and being a heavy metal fan in France. They note that this study may not be relevant for all countries for the following reasons: firstly, cults and sects are prohibited and outlawed by the Constitution (<http://www.derives-sectes.gouv.fr>). Secondly, members of heavy metal fan clubs and french heavy metal bands say that the impact of the lyrics is weaker in France because most of them are in english (Recours, Aussagel & Trujillo, 2009). It may seem that these two factors may serve as isolators giving the musical qualities more importance than the lyrics in the music or the cults associated with it. In the report, levels of anxiety and depression were measured in 333 heavy metal enthusiasts, of which 89% were male. “The results indicate that fans of metal music in France are in good health with respect to anxiety and depression” (Recours, Aussagel & Trujillo, 2009, p. 484). This was in relation to the internal factors directly associated with metal. When looking at the external factors on the other hand, such as educational level or employment status, differences were found. This supports Gowensmith & Bloom’s (1997) suggestion that other life-factors than musical preferences are of great importance. Even though the internal factors directly related to heavy metal did not show significant results concerning the participants’ mental health, some of them did nevertheless seem to influence the levels of anxiety and depression of heavy metal fans. Those who wrote lyrics, consumed a lot of alcohol during concerts and those engaged with scarification showed higher levels of anxiety and depression than the others. Again this is not necessarily a consequence of the music. As the authors write: “(...) it would be interesting to determine whether writing metal music songs increases anxiety or if being anxious motivates one to write metal music songs” (Recours, Aussagel & Trujillo, 2009, p. 485). They also mention that people who are anxious tend to drink more regardless of musical preference.

Regarding external factors, Stack (1998) finds in his research that there is indeed a link between being a heavy metal fan and suicide acceptability. His conclusion is nevertheless that this is insignificant because the levels of religiosity in heavy metal fans is very low, and that «traditional religion represent, in part, the culture of hope» (Stack, 1998, p. 390-391). By suggesting that the lack of religion and thus hope is to blame for high suicide acceptability, he supports the theory that external factors not necessarily associated with heavy metal can be more significant than the music itself. As to musical preference as an indicator of drug-abuse, the results show different findings. Some show that heavy metal preference may be a predictor of drug-abuse (Arnett 1991, 1996), while other studies reject this (Rosenbaum & Prinsky 1991; Leming 1987). Either way, in a research project on drug abusers in a recovery program including music therapy, Baker, Gleadhill &

Dingle (2007) found that music has an uplifting, happier and/or positive effect on the emotional states of the majority of the participants. Horesh (2003) states that: «Music, for addicts, has powerful destructive and healing potential» (p. 19). In this case the associations to the music play an important role in determining its role.

North & Hargreaves (2008) list up more than 20 cases of research that prove a relationship between trouble music and delinquency and criminality. They determine trouble music as the genres most commonly associated with negative behavior: heavy metal and rap. They go on by showing how numerous of the studies have caveats that may put their conclusions into questioning. They give the example of a study by North, Desborough & Skarstein (2005) that shows that problem music fans score higher in psychoticism than persons who were not fans. The same study showed that «(...) the frequency of carrying out delinquent acts did not differ between fans and non-fans when controlling for psychoticism» (North & Hargreaves 2008, p. 169). This suggests that the psychoticism rather than the music can be related to delinquent acts among fans of «problem music». They show another study that found that people with behavioral problems seem to like heavy metal a lot (Epstein, Pratto & Skipper, 1990), but that the only thing provable in the study was that the musical preference of the participants could predict their ethnicity. The studies mentioned above are examples of studies that might have looked for negative aspects of heavy metal music, and found it. North & Hargreaves (2008) suggest turning this around to look at some negative aspects of «light music» (i.e. pop). Schwartz & Fouts (2003) found that among the 164 participating adolescents, fans of heavy metal had more deleterious personalities than fans of «light music» such as pop, but they also found that fans of «light music» scored significantly worse than fans of heavy music on some measures.

Adolescents preferring light music were more likely to be preoccupied with trying to do the right and proper things while still keeping their emotions in check. They also were more likely to have 2 developmental concerns, their sexuality and relationships with peers. (Schwartz & Fouts 2003, p. 211)

Tervo (2001) confirms this by saying that rock music (being heavier than the «light music» described by Swartz & Fouts, 2003) allows adolescents to explore their sexual fantasies and feelings. He describes rock music as being a «caress without a touch» (Tervo, 2001), experienced as a state of mind where one's own fantasies and body join together.

These factors seem to be less obviously negative than the negative factors on which heavy music fans scored highest, such as being violent, having negative identities and having problems with parents and families. This suggests nevertheless that there might be other mental challenges related to other musical genres than those of heavy music. Scharzt & Fouts (2003) concluded that the participants with eclectic musical taste demonstrated the healthiest personalities.

2. 5. Heavy metal and identity

Haters call me bitch, call me faggot, call me whitey.

But I'm something you can never be.

- Marilyn Manson - Better of Two Evils, *The Golden Age of Grotesque*

A lot of literature on music and identity is to be found. This topic overlaps into fields such as music psychology, musicology and music therapy amongst others. Because this is a big topic that potentially demands more attention than I can allow in this thesis, I have limited my findings to the literature of most relevance or specifically concerning heavy metal. However, an interesting question that arises is whether the identity attracted the music, or whether the music shaped the identity.

Ruud (2013) suggests that we see music as a self object. Referring to Klev (2003) he describes a self object as «...the subjective aspect of something who's task is to preserve, support, sustain, maintain and confirm the self. (...) These objects can, with their presence and activity, awaken and preserve the self and the feeling of having a self» (Ruud 2013, p. 87-88). Ruud describes music as a «supportive environment» (p. 90) in relation to tolerating and investigating one's own emotions. A slight association to the importance of a caregiver's stability in the accommodation of affects of a child is made. This indicates that music's role could share some similarities with the role of a caregiver for a child. Music can also be associated with events in life, being more or less significant. Ruud uses the feeling of being in love as an example. Many people experience the time of being in love as having a specific song to it, and listening to that song later will awaken that feeling. One can almost say that in this, and in similar cases, music becomes the event, or at least the emotions connected to the memory of that event.

DeNora (1999) gives the following suggestion on music's role: "Music can be used as a device for the reflexive process of remembering/constructing who one is, a technology for spinning the apparently 'continuous' tale of who one 'is'" (p. 45). She also mentions music as a «change agent» that can regulate moods or emotions to a specific situation. Music can be used as a «soundtrack» by confirming the current situations and allowing the listener to go even deeper into it's emotions. As an example, some people would play calm music when taking a bath to make them even more relaxed. To apply music in this fashion gives examples of what DeNora (1999, 2000) calls «music as a technology of the self».

North & Hargreaves (1999) investigated a hypothesis that adolescents use music as a personality badge. Even though British pop music was reported by British adolescents as being the most prestigious musical style, and heavy metal scored significantly lower than British pop, heavy metal still was considered more prestigious than ballet music and country and western. This was found when investigating how adolescents «hold normative expectations regarding the characteristics of different musical styles» (North & Hargreaves 1999, p. 90). They also investigated how adolescents see themselves in relation to their musical preference. In a social context, they found that the participants were more positive to persons identifying with the same musical sub-culture as themselves, but that this did not mean that they had more negative associations with other musical sub-cultures. As a whole, the study confirmed that music is used as a badge in adolescents' social cognition. They also found that «(...)higher levels of self-esteem were associated with adolescents identifying themselves more strongly with a particular musical sub-culture» (North & Hargreaves 1999, p. 90). Snell & Hodgetts (2007) portray how being a part of a musical sub-culture can influence levels of self-esteem. The following quote is from one heavy metal fan and bar owner who was part of a musical sub-culture centered around his heavy metal bar:

People come up and ask me if I can play their song. If you have a song that helped get you through a rough patch in life and you can hear it in a bar and everyone's head-banging and into it . . . It makes you feel really good. You feel like part of a community. (Snell & Hodgetts 2007, p. 434)

This short quote might confirm North & Hargreaves' (1999) findings from the perspective of the informant, that identifying with a musical sub-culture can influence the levels of self-esteem.

As mentioned earlier, heavy metal fans are occasionally be expected by some to be anti-social or mentally unstable. Scharzt & Fouts (2003) looked at the personalities of fans of different kinds of music, including «heavy music». The following is from the profile of the heavy music fans' personality:

Adolescents preferring heavy music were more likely to lack a stable sense of identity (...) Listening to such music may be one of the ways with which they deal with this diffused identity status (Larson, 1995). By listening to music that has themes (e.g., distrust, lack of self-understanding) and sounds (e.g., harsh, distorted) that match their identity issues and feelings, they share with other listeners and the performers having similar characteristics. Thus, heavy music may (a) tell them that they are not alone in this developmental task, (b) give them a refuge for validating their confusions about identity, and (c) provide a safe context for beginning to explore and organize a sense of self (North and Hargreaves, 1999; Schave and Schave, 1989). (Scharzt & Fouts, 2003, p. 211)

Again the question of whether the musical preference or the lack of stable sense of identity came first is relevant. Heavy metal is described as a potential indicator of adolescents' unstable identities, but the music is also suggested as a coping mechanism and a way of not feeling alone in difficult situations,

Deyhle (1998) describes the case of a group of Navajo youth who used heavy metal with its music, symbols and clothing to express their identification with opposition. Growing up in between «two worlds» and identities they were perceived as «bad indians» by other indians because they did not speak the language or know all the traditions, and yet they did not want to identify with the white population in the community and their assimilation. They chose to identify with heavy metal because of its rejection of traditional power relations and to express their non-conformity with the assimilation expectations of the white population. Heavy metal, in this case, represents the music of the minorities and of the suppressed, of victims of racism and discrimination. As Snell & Hodgetts (2007) point out, heavy metal is a marginalized genre and supporters have to «go all in» on supporting the bands so they don't disappear. The Navajo youth not only wore clothes supporting heavy metal bands, but also T-shirts with symbols and writings that support indian culture. Snell & Hodgetts (29007) also point out how T-shirts and other clothing is a physical and psychological way of connecting with a community. In these cases we talk about communities that stand out from the lot. The heavy metal community described by Snell & Hodgetts (2007) is intentionally different

from the rest of the community. It is a community that represents rebellion and being different. Through the use of physical effects such as T-shirts or by participating in social activities such as head banging they confirm to each other a collective identity.

2. 6. Heavy metal as catharsis

It's a chance to just rail, to get it out, to express that you're not going along with the program.

– Wayne Kramer, MC5 (in McFadyen & Dunn, 2011)

Before the emerging of heavy metal as a genre, in 1957 the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut published «Observations on the Psychological Functions of Music». In this article he describes three functions of music: «emotional catharsis for repressed wishes, playful mastery of the threats of trauma, and enjoyable submission to rules» (Kohut, 1957, p. 406). This is in relation to the three elements of the mind: id, ego and superego. Concerning the id he states: «The tensions which are produced by repressed wishes are allowed vicarious release in the musical emotion when otherwise they would have remained pent up» (Kohut, 1957, p. 390-391). The id, representing our most primal unconsciousness, is usually associated with aggressive and sexual drifts. Kohut (1957) suggests that aggressive tensions can be released through music, thus having a cathartic effect. Also as a «mastery of the threats of trauma» music can be a means of expressing and investigating difficult emotions in a safe environment. Stack (1998) mentions how music can have a beneficial value for teens in difficult situations in relation to school, family and neighborhoods. “For these teens, heavy metal music may have provided a means of catharsis, a means of expressing the individual and social chaos of their everyday lives” (Stack, 1998, p. 390). He goes on by referring to Weinstein (1991) who said that music can actually save lives. Weinstein interviewed heavy metal fans on the topic, some of which said that heavy metal was the only thing that had kept them from committing suicide. Also in these cases the music served as an emotional outlet, or catharsis. Henry & Caldwell (2007) support this in their research showing how participants of heavy metal concerts feel rejuvenated after a concert. One of their informants says:

A lot of people listen to HMM (heavy metal music) to get aggression out, but it's a substitute for actual aggression. Like it's sometimes easier to scream into a microphone than to go down the street and start a fight. (Henry & Caldwell, 2007, p. 170)

In the documentary «Metal Evolution» (McFadyen & Dunn, 2011) the anthropologist Sam Dunn visits the neuroscientist Laurel Trainor from McMaster University. After wiring up Sam's head they expose him to different musical genres, including heavy metal. They find that the conscious thought tends to disconnect when listening to heavy metal, and that a more primal part of the brain takes over. In a heavy metal context, this allows you to exercise the part of you that is aggressive, but without any real danger. Lacourse, Claes and Villeneuve (2001) use the term «vicarious release»: «some studies suggest that listening to HM (Heavy Metal) music has a positive impact on reducing suicidal thoughts (Weinstein, 1991) and negative emotions (Arnett, 1995), and this, through vicarious release» (p.323).

Catharsis is obviously a very relevant topic when looking at the uses of heavy metal music. Precin (2011) describes the case of a young woman diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder after childhood abuse. As a part of occupational therapy this young woman used her skills as a musician to process her experiences. By writing her story in song lyrics, and performing it to audiences she was able to work through her trauma. Precin (2011) describes how this young woman «...was able to release emotions in a much more effective way than merely speaking about them» (p. 80). Her audience would give her immediate positive feedback, strengthening her self esteem and giving her a sense of competence. The music became her catharsis as she expressed her rage towards her perpetrators through music in the form of transference. Together with her therapist the young woman made meaning out of the music and made it the main tool in working through her trauma.

2. 7. Reflexive Summary

This literature shows that music can serve in many different ways in relation to the user's health. Some literature argue that heavy metal can be an indicator of a young person's low mental health, whereas others deny this and argue that it can be a tool for overcoming difficult stages in life. McFerran and Saarikallio (2014) suggest that an awareness and responsibility might be a key in making music listening beneficial. Asking an adolescent about his use of music, they found, he will most likely describe it as positive and beneficial to his health. But when asking more specifically

McFerran and Saarikallio (2014) found that the use of music might as well have a negative impact on their lives. What can make a difference is whether or not the listener is capable of reflecting on the use of the music or not, and through this reflection be responsible of his or her use of music. A responsibility in this case would mean that the listener reflects on the effect certain kinds of music has on him at certain times, and that he is aware of the possible negative side-effects of «the wrong music at the wrong time».

Based on the findings of this literature review the research questions presented earlier were formulated. To help see their relevance in relation to the findings so far I find it relevant at this point to briefly present the questions again:

How can heavy metal music be a positive resource in the lives of adolescents?

How can this be applied to music therapy?

The following chapter will deal with theories relevant to my findings both from the literature review and from my interviews.

3. Relevant Theories

After conducting the literature review I got an overview of the theories most used in relation to music therapy and heavy metal. While performing the interviews some topics occurred that I did not find in any literature focusing on heavy metal, and even in more general music therapy literature dealing with heavy music. In order to understand these topics I found it necessary to look at theories that can offer an explanation to what the interviewees experience. The following chapter will go through cognitive dissonance theory, exposure treatment, intersubjectivity, recognition and mirroring, music in everyday life and the role of the therapeutic relationship. In addition I will look closer at catharsis theory. This was mentioned in the literature review, but in order to more fully understand the concept I take a closer look at catharsis in general, rather than just focusing on its relation to heavy metal.

I have consciously made the choice to limit the amount of theories that are more associated with music and music therapy. I believe several of these have been mentioned in the literature review, and that those that aren't have either not caught my eye, or have simply not felt relevant enough for

this thesis. I choose to use the following theories that are obtained from the field of psychology. My approach is eclectic and I do not bound my self to one psychological tradition. I have chosen to use theories that can explain what my interviewees have expressed, and I intentionally chose some theories that are previously not connected to music (to my knowledge). The theories presented will be used as the framing theory in the analysis and discussion of the interviews. The theory will be presented prior to the data so it may shed light on the following data material and perhaps, also make my interpretations clearer when presented.

3. 1. Cognitive dissonance theory

«It has frequently been implied, and sometimes even pointed out, that the individual strives toward consistency within himself» (Festinger, 1957, p. 1). These are the opening words of Festinger's *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* from 1957. The theory concerns, as quoted, the individual's strive towards consistency, and what happens when this is not possible. These inconsistencies, later described as dissonances, occur when an individual's attitudes are internally inconsistent. Festinger uses people's attitudes towards different ethnic groups as an example. A person might say and think that Gypsies are just as good as other people, but he wouldn't want them to live in his neighborhood. There can also be inconsistencies in what we think and do. A good example is a person who smokes, and knows that it is harming him. Festinger describes rationalization of the inconsistency as an option. Even though the person knows smoking is bad for his health, he may also feel:

(a) he enjoys smoking so much it's worth it; (b) the chances of his health suffering is not as serious as some would make out; (c) he can't always avoid every possible dangerous contingency and still live; (d) perhaps even if he stopped smoking he would put on weight which is equally bad the health. (Festinger, 1957, p. 2)

This makes his ideas about smoking consistent with him smoking. In cases where rationalizing or changing his actions fails, the inconsistency continues to exist causing psychological discomfort. As long as there is an inconsistency, or a dissonance, there will be pressure to resolve it.

Cognitive dissonance, or dissonant cognition: the term cognition refers here to «the things a person knows about himself, about his behavior, and about his surroundings» (Festinger, 1957, p. 8).

Dissonance is a very relevant term in this context. Not only does it relate to a cognitive context, but

it is also a musical term describing the mis-matching between two notes (Benestad, 1973). In the middle ages the interval *tritone* was forbidden and associated with the devil (Tritonus: Musikk, 2012). This dissonant interval is today frequently used by certain heavy metal sub-genres, such as black metal. The opposite of dissonance is consonance, referring to harmony and balance. Also in Festinger's theory consonance is a relevant term. Where dissonance represents two elements not fitting together, their inconsistency or contradiction, a consonant relation between two elements is described as follows: «If, considering a pair of elements, either one *does* follow from the other, then the relation between them is consonant» (Festinger, 1957, p. 15).

Nolen-Hoeksema, Fredrickson, Loftus & Wagenaar (2009) describe how, when experiencing cognitive dissonance, one usually chooses the easiest way to get rid of the unpleasant feeling, which is to change our attitudes. They also point out how changing a line of action already undertaken produces even more cognitive dissonance than carrying it out. Changing one's behavior would indicate that one's initial judgement has been poor. Again the example of the smoker is relevant, and as Festinger (1957) also mentions, rationalization is the easiest way to get rid of the cognitive dissonance.

Masataka & Perlovsky (2012) show how music can reduce cognitive dissonance in children. In the experiment cognitive dissonance was created in children while they were playing. The results showed that listening to music (in this case a Mozart sonata) reduced their cognitive dissonance. There might be several reasons for this, for example the music simply may have distracted or relaxed the children and made them care less, and thus the cognitive dissonance less important, or, as the authors suggest, it may have enhanced cognitive performance and increased the children's brain activation. This enhancement of the children's cognition on both lower and higher levels could, according to the authors, help the children reconcile the cognitive dissonance (Masataka & Perlovsky, 2012).

3. 2. Catharsis

In the literature review catharsis and its relationship to heavy metal had its own heading. In order to better understand catharsis and to see if it is relevant in the analysis, I will look at the theory behind it. The term catharsis originates from greek, and means cleansing, or purging. Aristotle mentioned catharsis as the purging of negative emotions and ideas when seen played out on a stage, and that seeing difficult emotions played out on stage could have a healing effect (Aristotle, 2001, referred

to in Powell n.d.). Concerning music and catharsis he wrote: «cathartic melodies give innocent joy to men» (Aristotle, 2001, p. 1131 referred to in Powell, n.d.). Bauer and Freud described catharsis as an involuntary expression of emotions, as an instinctive reaction, such as crying (Breuer & Freud, 1974, referred to in Powell n.d.). Today catharsis is a term mostly used in relation to psychoanalysis. As Freud developed his model of the unconscious, consisting of the superego, ego and id, the idea of sexual and aggressive drives as a product of the id where a part of it (Priestley, 1994). Catharsis then is the expression of aggressive emotions in order to reduce them. Nolen-Hoeksema et al. (2009) show similarities to hunger-based feelings and actions where the practice of eating will reduce the hunger. Also they show the distinction between aggression as a drive and aggression as a learned response. If the comparison to hunger-based feelings is correct, one should think aggression should be reduced by expressing it. Studies question this and suggest that in fact, expressing aggression by acting it out increases the level of aggression, or it maintains the same level (Nolen-Hoeksema et al. 2009; Bushman, 2002). Also by indirect exposure to aggression, for example violent movies or music, an increase in aggression is proved (Steuer, Applefield & Smith, 1971; Andreson, Carnagey & Eubanks, 2003 referred to in Nolen-Hoeksema et al. 2009). Despite this, catharsis still stands as a term widely used when talking about «venting» emotions, or «letting out some steam».

North and Hargreaves (2008) deal with music in particular and its relation to aggressive behavior. They are critical to previous research proving music as a potential negative influence on adolescents and show research suggesting that there is no significant relationship between «problem music» and problem behavior. In the chapters concerning findings and discussion I will take a closer look at the heavy metal fans' own experiences of catharsis and whether they experienced an increase or a decrease in aggressive feelings and behavior when listening to heavy metal music.

In a music therapy context, Mary Priestley, as the founder of «Analytical Music Therapy», later known as «Analytically Oriented Music Therapy», implied psychoanalytic principals into her music therapy practice (Wigram, Nygaard Pedersen & Bonde, 2002). Ruud (1980) describes the main strength of music, in an Analytic Music Therapy context, as it being regarded as a «vehicle for emotional self-expression» (Ruud, 1980, p. 22). He goes on by quoting Wright & Priestley: «...a physical container into which the tensions of the emotions can be poured, so that the cathartic effect leads on to the deep peace, harmony and physical relaxation which we are all seeking» (Wright & Priestley, 1972, referred to in Ruud, 1980, p. 22). When a patient then is relaxed she/he can more

easily examine the causes of the anger. In this case catharsis can result in the strengthening of the ego within safe frames (Ruud, 1980). Recent music therapy research proves that music as a catharsis does reduce aggression in children with aggressive behavior (Sing & Agarkar, 2013). Regardless of this, the authors call for more research on the topic.

3. 3. Intersubjectivity, recognition and mirroring

In psychoanalytic theory there has traditionally been a great focus on the role of drives in the defining of the self. During what is referred to as «the relational turning» the focus changed towards relational needs such as safety, self-confirmation and being part of a community. The focus is then moved from a one-person psychology being intra-focused to a two-person psychology with a complementing intersubjective focus (E. Stänicke, Varvin & L. I. Stänicke, 2013).

The psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Daniel Stern started, together with a group of infant researchers, to observe mother-child interaction during the first months and years of life. His findings contributed greatly in changing the general understanding of infants. From seeing infants as driven by primitive drifts, Stern suggested the human infant as being a social being with abilities to communicate from the moment they are born (Hart & Schwartz, 2008). Intersubjectivity, being one of the frequently used terms by Stern, concerns shared experiences. In a mother-child situation the mother might respond to a child's enthusiasm for a toy. She will get in tone with her child, matching it's emotions and recognizing them. This way intersubjective relatedness can occur (Stern, 1995). Intersubjective relatedness allows not only for the physical and sensory distinction of self and others, but also the sharing of subjective experiences. Intersubjective relatedness promotes self-development, raises self-understanding and gives the individual access to its own self-processes (Løvlie-Schibbye, 2004), making it a very relevant term in the analysis of the data which is to be presented.

In a psychotherapy context, Løvlie-Schibbye (2004) mentions recognition as a very important element. Referring to Taylor (1992) and Honneth (1995) she states that «We need to be seen, understood and accepted by the other. Usually this need is not met» (Løvlie-Schibbye, 2004, p. 22). A human being needs to be seen, understood and respected in order to feel valued. Recognition also participates in the building of self-confidence. She also mentions recognition in a philosophical context. Kierkegaard (1978) and Gadamer (1995) claimed that recognition reveals something new in the other. Parts of the self get illuminated and enlightened when recognition functions, and it thus

brings forth something that the two parts have not previously seen (Løvlie-Schibbye, 2004). Trollalden (2009) says how mutual recognition is important among people in general, but crucial in parent-child and therapist-client relationships. This is because the responsibility for sharing in these cases is unevenly distributed. The parent, or these cases the therapist, has the responsibility to initialize recognition. Affective exchange allows for shared experiences where recognition may play an important role. In music therapy the music can be a tool to ease this affective exchange, allowing for expression in a non-verbal way (Trollalden, 2009).

Mirroring is a more physical way of recognizing. Also here, Løvlie-Schibbye (2004) uses the mother-child relation as an example for processes also present in psychotherapy. If a child is frustrated, the mother can mirror this frustration, adding a comforting and calming sense to it. This way the mother adds something to the child's emotion and helps it understand its emotions. This is something that can also be present in psychotherapy, where the therapist can suggest additional emotions to the ones expressed by the client, or stimulate him to reveal them himself. This way the client could gain a greater understanding of his own emotions (Løvlie-Schibbye, 2004).

Intersubjectivity, recognition and mirroring are closely related and one does not exclude the other. In fact, it seems that if one is present, the two others can be expected (Trollalden, 2009), especially intersubjectivity, being more general than recognition and mirroring. In the case of music listening it can be argued whether it has intersubjective elements to it, and whether there is a sense of recognition and mirroring. Music is a one-way communication, but perhaps this is not necessarily how all listeners experience it.

3. 4. Therapeutic relationship

Pavlicevic (1997) refers to the primitive nature of non-verbal communication that may occur in music therapeutic improvisation. It does not require the use of words, and it can be compared to the communication between certain animals. Even though they don't speak together, they know each other and understand each other to a certain extent. This is, as mentioned, in the case of an improvisation monitored by a music therapist. In receptive use of music, Metzner (2004) describes how a composer communicates with the listener by sharing his expression of emotions in his composition, giving the composition a cathartic effect. The composer creates his work knowing that his expression of emotions will be available for interpretation by the listener. This creates an

imaginary dialogue between the listener and the composer. This could be regarded as transference, and it can produce empathy within the listener:

The dialogue partner, namely the interpreter or listener, produces empathic responses—this does not automatically mean congruent or enduring ones—to the contents with which a composer has occupied himself or herself and to the form of expression he or she has chosen (Metzner, 2004, p. 146).

This way music serves as an interaction between two parts, even though the listener's responses will not be available for the producer. In instrumental music the focus will then be on the emotions *experienced* by the listener from the music.

Empathy is mentioned in the above quote as a result of the interpretation of a musical piece. Empathy is, as stated in a research summary on the therapeutic relationship and psychotherapy outcome by Lambert & Barley (2001), one of the main elements in a therapeutic relationship. They also show the importance of the relationship between the client and the therapist in treatment. The diagram (Figure 1) shows the typical variables present in a therapeutic process as presented by Lambert and Barley (2001), and their importance in producing client change is presented as percentages. Extratherapeutic change refers to factors outside of therapy, such as a supporting

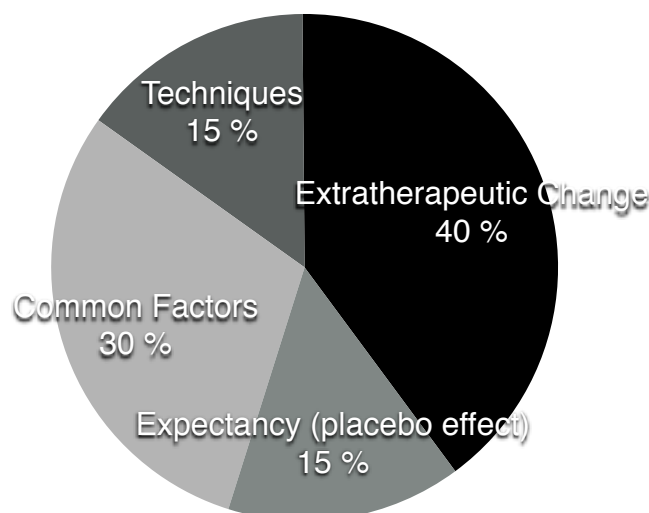


Figure 1, *Variables in a Therapeutic Process* (Lambert & Barley, 2001)

environment and social change or fortuitous events. Expectancy, including placebo effect and therapeutic techniques used by the therapist are along with the common factors all variables that are more closely associated with therapist activity. Lambert and Barley (2001) describe the common factors as including the client-therapist relationship. Hence, the diagram shows that among the factors most closely associated with therapist activity, the relationship is most important. Clients who experienced their therapy as successful described their therapists as warm, attentive, interested, understanding, and respectful. Also empathic understanding and affirmation of the patient were reported as important factors for success. In the discussion I will look at these attributes and how heavy metal may show them given the role of a therapist, or given a role in therapy. Given the importance of the relationship between the client and the therapist I see it as highly relevant to look at the possibilities of the music, or indirectly the artists, showing these attributes and perhaps creating elements from a therapeutic relationship.

This is not consistent with Bruscia's (1998) definition of music therapy that implies that there is a therapist involved. I here suggest that the music, or the source of the music, may in some cases take a role similar to that of a therapist. The different relationships that may occur in a music therapy context are as described by Bruscia (1998): Intrapersonal, intramusical, interpersonal, intermusical, sociocultural and environmental relationships. Intrapersonal relationships are those found within one person. For example the relationship between one's emotions and body. Intramusical relationship refers to what happens between parts of the music of a person, for example between the rhythm and the tonality. Interpersonal relationships are not musically bound and concern for example the relationship between one person's emotions and another person's body language. Also intermusical relationships concern the relationship between two persons, but in this case the relationship between the musical aspects that happen, like one person's rhythm's relationship to another person's tonality. Sociocultural relationships concern the community or heritage a person is a part of, and the environmental relationships are the relationships a person has to the physical environment they live in. Bruscia (1998) also suggests that among all possible relationships in music therapy two are of great significance: the relationship between the client and the music, and the relationship between the client and the therapist. These can be as transference, where the client relates to the music or the therapist as someone from the past, or as authentic relationships when the client relates to the music or the therapist as themselves and what they offer in the present. He also makes a distinction between the use of music *as* therapy and music *in* therapy. Even though a music

therapist is involved in both cases, when music is used *as* therapy music is the main agent of therapeutic change, and when the music is used *in* therapy the therapist takes this role.

3. 5. Music in everyday life

All of my informants reported listening to music on a regular basis, and in many different situations. Whenever they saw the possibility, they would put on some music, and in most cases heavy metal. Skånland (2011) suggests that the use of music in everyday life, and specifically from portable units such as MP3 players, can be a coping resource. Listening to music can give the listener the opportunity to «...carve out a personal space, which enhances their sense of control» (Skånland, 2011, p. 29). Her findings also show that «It seems that the MP3 player can function as a coping resource on several levels, from coping with internal stressors, such as destructive or distracting thoughts, to coping with external stressors, such as noise and crowding» (Skånland, 2011, p. 30). DeNora (2000) describes music's *affordances* and *appropriations*. Musical affordances are the possibilities in the music, the qualities that can be used as a resource. To offer examples: a calm type of music can be relaxing, and an energetic type of music can be energizing. Musical affordances are the resources the music provides, including its moods, messages, energy levels and actions. Appropriations are then these resources in practice. They are the use of these resources available in the music. The music alone is not enough to be a resource as such, it has to be used and its usefulness depends on how it is taken and used.

Christopher Small in his work of 1998 suggests the word *Musicking*. Musicking, being a verb, refers to the activity of music, not the music in itself. His definition is as follows: *To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing) or by dancing* (Small, 1998, p. 9). He states that *to music* concerns any participation in a musical performance, either active or passive, but it does not describe the music. It is important to make it clear that musicking is dependent on participants in order to exist, and as all music arguably has a creator, or a performer, music without a participant does not exist. By including music listening in his definition Small makes musicking a relevant term for this thesis, and as we will see music listening is only the source of the music's potentials, or affordances. By appropriating these affordances, or by musicking, my informants access music's world of possibilities both as a positive and a negative resource.

3. 6. Exposure treatment

Exposure treatment is an important part of cognitive-behavior therapy. Cognitive-behavior therapy focuses on teaching the client how to control disturbing emotional responses, such as anxiety and depression. This is done by learning new and more effective ways of thinking about and interpreting experiences (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2009). Exposure treatment exposes a person for situations that provoke anxiety. This could be done gradually, or all at once. The exposure combined with positive self-instructions learned from the therapist will teach the client how to handle these situations (Irgens, 2000; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2009). In short terms exposure treatment focuses on exposing a person for what she/he is afraid of and what causes the anxiety. Even though exposure might be more a treatment than a theory, I chose to present it in this chapter because of its relevance to my findings. I believe heavy metal can be a way of exposing a person for not only what they fear around them, but perhaps also what they find difficult to see within themselves. This will of course be more thoroughly discussed in the discussion chapter.

3.7. Summary

This chapter looked at cognitive dissonance theory, catharsis, intersubjectivity, recognition and mirroring, the role of the therapeutic relationship, the use of music in everyday life and exposure treatment. These are all from various psychological fields, but do somehow also seem very relevant to my findings. As will be mentioned in the following chapter my approach is eclectic and I do not commit myself to one specific theoretical field, but rather collect what makes most sense to me based on my pre-understanding. These theories are meant to shed light on the data from my research and its analysis. Before the data is presented the methods used to attain it are presented in the following chapter.

4. Method

4. 1. The Qualitative Interview

The purpose of the interview is to obtain rich, descriptive information about how other people experience different aspects of their lives. The qualitative interview is particularly well suited to obtain the interviewees' own experiences, thoughts and feelings. (my translation of Dalen, 2004, p. 15)

As described by Dalen the qualitative interview can obtain the interviewees' own experiences and perceptions. In my thesis this is exactly what I am looking for; individuals' own experiences of heavy metal as something positive in their lives. Following up this, I want to look at what characteristics in heavy metal that might have had positive effects on these individuals. Doing qualitative interviews of three individuals in different current situations, but with the common point that heavy metal has or had a positive impact on their lives appears to me as a good starting point. My goal is not to find out if heavy metal music typically is good or bad for people, but to look at some individuals for whom this music has had a good influence or turned their lives in a positive direction. I want to see if some of the qualities they experienced from the music are applicable in a music therapy setting. Malterud (2011) describes the qualitative approach as very relevant for this:

In qualitative studies we work to develop descriptions and analyses of characteristics and attributes from the field where these occur. We want these descriptions, terms and theoretical models that we develop and present, to be applicable to other settings than where they originally occurred. (My translation of Malterud, 2011, p. 55)

This fits well with my interviews and the work done in the process following them. In the interviews, I collected information about how heavy metal has influenced the interviewees' lives and looked for qualities that can be applied in music therapy. Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) note that the interview produces knowledge, and that this knowledge is produced by the interviewer and the interviewee together. The conversation and relation they have is the source of knowledge. This means that the interviewer should facilitate this production by preparing to the interview and gaining conversation- and interviewing skills.

Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) use the metaphors of the interviewer as a miner or traveller. The miner is digging for knowledge that he knows is existent, removing layers to reveal the truth. Through the analysis he keeps purifying the results to end up with pure knowledge that is neither polluted by subjective opinions nor influenced by leading questions. The traveller on the other hand is exploring unknown territories, meeting locals that can show him around. He gathers information and stories from the locals that will be analyzed and interpreted when he comes home. He explores together with the locals, and tries to see and understand things from their perspective.

In this project I am mostly identifying with the traveller. Even though the literature review gives me indications as to what I can expect, the information I will collect is still unknown to me and I will

let the interviewee show me his world and I will try to understand it from his perspective. On the other hand I do hope to end up with knowledge that can be applied outside of the given context, giving me a little role also as a miner.

4. 2. Sample

Originally, I had planned to find 2 or 3 interviewees by putting up information sheets at schools and near heavy metal concert venues, and also announce my project in heavy metal forums online. This turned out to be unnecessary. I have known my project would be evolving around this topic for a long time and thus also told friends and family about it. Two of the interviewees actually contacted me having heard about my project either from me or from others, saying they would gladly meet up for an interview if needed. The third one I met through work relations. Seeing how much pleasure he found in heavy metal music I asked him in person, and after some thinking, he agreed. All of these three persons say they have experienced heavy metal as something positive in their lives and they want to share their experiences to help shed light on the positive sides of the music.

3 informants are quite few informants. Originally I planned only using one and to make it more like a case study. I found that it could be more interesting to do a couple of more interviews and look at similarities and differences. Even though 3 informants is not a lot, it is sufficient within the frames of this thesis. Being a qualitative project I focus on looking at few individuals and their experiences, fully aware of the fact that their answers are not necessarily representative for all other heavy metal fans. Also, I found that 3 is better than 2, not only because it gives me more diversity, but also it allows me to see if one informant stands out from the two others. In an ideal situation this project would cover a much greater number and the results obtained would perhaps be more significant. The time frame would also have been extended, but for the given frames I believe 3 is sufficient.

The sample for the interviews consisted of:

Hallgeir, 22 years old

Snorre, 26 years old

Truls, 20 years old

Hallgeir is a student from a small place with an approximate population of 1500. He played in a heavy metal band through all of his adolescence. Snorre is from a big city in which he lived most of

his life. He never played in a heavy metal band, but did play other genres towards the end of his adolescence. He was applying for jobs at the time of the interview. Truls is originally from a south Asian country. He came alone to Norway as a 14 year old. He is currently in child care and he plays various instruments in various bands, including a heavy metal band. These individuals will be more thoroughly presented when presenting the data and the analysis.

4. 3. The interview questions

In order to get the right information without digging too much a good interview guide is necessary. Rubin & Rubin (2005) suggest translating the research puzzle into smaller pieces that can serve as the main questions. This way the questions may seem less overwhelming and more comprehensible. They can thus be more easily related to the interviewees' own experiences. Also, I chose to make the interview semi-structured. This allows me to be relatively free in asking follow-up questions and following interesting topics, but still gives me the safety of a guide that ensures that I stick to relevant questions and topics and do not wander off (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In the interview guide I chose to focus on the interviewees' personal stories and experiences. In recruiting interviewees I had one single criterion: that heavy metal music had played a positive role in their lives. I didn't ask about more than that at the moment of recruitment to avoid expectations. The interview guide can be seen in figure 2 (english translation).

This interview guide consists of 10 interview questions in addition to some background questions. The background questions are to help me get the framework around the interviewees and can also point out important information that influences the interviewees' answers. As I will go into later, these contextual questions can be an important part of the hermeneutic approach I have chosen. It could be relevant to know whether they grew up in a big city or a small village. The present family situation is interesting in case a spouse or family members influence the habits of the subject. Practical relationships to music are also of great relevance. For example it can be interesting to see if a professional relationship to music has an influence on their thoughts, experiences and use of music.

Interview guide

Background questions:

Age:
Gender:
Place of birth (size):
Family situation:
Practical relationships to music (bands, work etc.):

Interview questions:

1. How did you discover heavy metal?
2. What in the music attracted you?
- Has this changed over time? What is it like today?
3. What is your relationship to the lyrics?
4. When do you listen to heavy metal?
5. Have you experienced that heavy metal has influenced a situation positively?
- How would this experience be without the music, or with different music?
6. Have you experienced that heavy metal has influenced a situation negatively?
7. In your opinion, what is the best and the worst thing about heavy metal?
8. What are your thoughts on the negative attention heavy metal gets?
9. What role would you give heavy metal in your life?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share? Comments?

Figure 2, *Interview Guide*

4. 4. Doing the interviews

I wanted to make the interviewees as comfortable and relaxed as possible in order to obtain good answers and reflections from them. A cafe was the first location that came to mind. The context is relaxed and a cup of coffee might loosen the tension. After some thought two obvious reasons for not choosing a cafe as the venue came up. Firstly, I recorded my interviews with a digital recorder (Zoom, H1, and a mini table-top tripod). Music and talking in the location could pollute the sound and make transcriptions more demanding and less precise. The second reason for doing it somewhere more private is that these interviews could get very personal, and I assumed it would be easier to be personal in private than in public, for example if the topic became very emotional. I finally chose to ask the interviewees some time before the interviews if they had any ideas, and if

not I suggested a place. The first interview was done in one of my university's rooms that were available. The interviewee in this case was a student and was comfortable with these locations. The second interview took place in another city. This gave me less flexibility, but the interviewee suggested his home as a venue and thus allowed a nice interview within the safety of his own home. The last interview was held in a meeting room in the same building as I had worked with the interviewee. This was a private room, but the location was known for him. Before starting each interview I did a brief sound check to make sure the recorder worked as it should.

Doing the first interview I experienced that the interviewee's throat got dry from the talking. In the following interviews I therefore brought drinks and snacks. This also made the setting less formal.

The two first interviewees showed up as planned, but the third one had forgotten. This was solved by setting a new date and by sending him a reminder the day before the interview.

Doing the interviews I found myself enjoying the situation. The two first ones went smoothly, and it was clear that they had prepared some answers, even though I didn't ask them to. Both of the first interviews lasted for about 60 minutes. I asked the follow-up questions I found relevant or interesting and managed to get clear answers. In the third interview, the one with Truls, I struggled more. He gave short answers, and at some point I got the impression that he gave the answers he thought I expected or wanted. Asking the same question twice could give me two different answers. This was a challenge for me and I spent some time on following up answers to understand what he meant. I will take a closer look at Truls' interview when presenting the data. This apparent insecurity could be an important finding in itself. Truls' interview lasted around 40 minutes.

4. 5. The role of the researcher

In the qualitative interview situation it is common for the interviewer to use kindness and warmth in order to get the interviewee comfortable and create a safe atmosphere (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This atmosphere might facilitate the deeper conversations and thus also put the interviewee in a vulnerable situation. Various techniques from psychotherapy can be used by the interviewer to get deeper answers or investigate the interviewee's experiences, although this should be avoided unless the interview is psychotherapeutic in nature and the interviewer has the required competence. This is not the case of my interviews, and I do my best to avoid making the interviewees say something they might regret. Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) sum up their chapter on the role of the researcher by

saying that learning ethical principals in research is not sufficient. The ethical principles should be accompanied by ethical behavior, and this again requires practice. Observing more experienced researchers is mentioned as one way to achieve more knowledge about ethical behavior. I did not get the chance to observe other interviews before my own project, but I did watch several videos explaining how to do good qualitative interviews. These were all found on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) using the words «qualitative interview». These gave me knowledge of basic things not to do and ways in which not to behave in an interview situation. Although these searches were done mostly as a curiosity the results proved useful.

Prior to my interviews I did an informal test interview to test my questions, but also to get practice in the role of the interviewer. As this interview was done on a friend I asked for comments on the questions and me as an interviewer. This test interview made me aware of important qualities such as authority and warmth that should be considered in the interview situation.

4. 6. Ethics

Because my informants were found through acquaintances it could be a challenge to keep them anonymous. That being said two of the informants said they didn't mind others knowing about it, but to be safe I told them to stay anonymous until the project is finished and they have read what it says about them. Also it might be easier for them to answer questions freely when knowing they will not be recognized.

Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) point out seven phases of an interview and the ethical dangers within each of them. The theme for instance should not only be considered whether beneficial for scientific purposes, but there should also be a focus on the human situations investigated and whether these can be influenced. In the planning phase I collected the informed consent of all informants and made sure that all information was treated confidentially. The possible impacts this project could have on the individuals' lives were also considered. This is also relevant for the interview phase that might be stressful or influence self-perception. In the transcription phase one should, according to Kvale & Brinkman (2009) consider the question of what is a loyal written transcription of spoken words. When doing the analysis I should be conscious about how much I analyze and whether the informant should participate in the analysis of their statements. In the verification phase it is important to make sure that all information that is reported is true and verified. This might again influence how critical the interview questions should be. Confidentiality is of great importance all

along the project, not least in the reporting phase. In this phase the effects of the report on informants as well as the institution representing it should be considered.

Before starting the interviews all informants were given thorough information about the project and interviews (see attachment 1). This information was repeated verbally before starting the interviews. All informants agreed to the interview and signed the informed consent sheet (see attachment 2).

The validity of my interviewees could be argued. After all they all have positive stories to tell about heavy metal. At least that is what I was expecting before starting the interviews. As mentioned before I have deliberately excluded persons with dominating negative experiences with heavy metal from my project. This is because my main focus is the positive experiences. With this in mind, Rubin & Rubin (2005) say that: «Interviewees should be *experienced* and *knowledgeable* in the area that you are interviewing about» (p. 64). It is important that the informants have first-hand experience with the topic. This could mean that they should have experience with heavy metal in general, but for my project it is important that they have positive experiences in particular.

Concerning experience all interviewees have currently or earlier on spent significant amounts of time listening to heavy metal. In some cases they have also played in heavy metal bands. A variety of perspectives is important to enhance the credibility of my interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). As my interviewees all are in different situations and stages in life, and from different backgrounds a certain variety in perspectives is obtained. I see the fact that my sample is exclusively male as a weakness in this project. Having a female informant as well could give a greater variety in perspectives and perhaps other knowledge. Because my sample literally came to me, and because I do not know any girls or women who are that passionate about heavy metal, I settled with my three young men.

4. 7. Hermeneutics and Reflexivity

I have chosen a hermeneutic approach in this project. «The purpose of hermeneutic interpretation is to attain valid and common understanding of what a text means» (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 69). Even though hermeneutics originally focused on religious texts, later developments of the term make it applicable to conversation as well as meaningful actions (Gadamer, 1975; Ricoeur, 1971 in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Every text gets its meaning from a context, and this way of thinking can be an important tool for qualitative researchers. In the interview situation this applies by giving me awareness that what is said in the interview might be connected to experiences of historical

nature, various orientations and traditions. It makes me analyze the interviews in a broader context than in the specific moment of the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). An important principle in hermeneutics is the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle makes the researcher alter between seeing the parts and the whole. The circle consists of the tools of reading, reflective writing and interpretation that allow a thorough analysis of the data (Kafle, 2011). As briefly mentioned the background questions asked in the beginning of the interviews helped me get a broader understanding of the contexts of the interviewees, which again can be an important part of the hermeneutic analysis.

My pre-understanding plays an important role in my interpretations and analysis. My theoretical orientation is of an eclectic nature, even though I believe psychodynamic theory has a great influence on how I interpret situations that might occur primarily between individuals. This is partly due to a course I did in psychoanalysis, but I believe that a 4 week practicum placement in Aalborg, with its analytically oriented music therapy, also influenced me a great deal. My music therapy training course is humanistic and teaches a resource oriented perspective, and a summer's work at a psychiatric hospital gave me insight to cognitive behavioral therapy. All of these experiences have influenced my understanding of human beings and music therapy, and I imagine I have collected the most reasonable elements from these various fields. I thus do not take one specific theoretical stance. I see these different theoretical fields as not contradictory, but rather supporting each other in shedding different lights on the same human nature, giving a broader understanding of it. My own reflexivity plays a great role in my interpretations, giving me a certain consciousness about my own thinking. Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2009) describe reflective research¹ as consisting of two main characteristics: careful interpretation and reflection. Reflection in this case concerns me as a researcher and my ability to go «inwards» and consider my interpretations in relation to my pre-understandings. Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2009) suggest defining reflection, in the case of empirical research, as «the *interpretation of interpretation* and the launching of a critical self-exploration of one's own interpretations of empirical material (including its construction)» (p. 9). Showing reflexivity is thus an important part of the hermeneutic approach I have to the interpretation and analysis of my data, and otherwise too. I show openness throughout the process and go back and forth in the material to investigate it extensively, and to get as close as possible to the core of my interpreted understandings.

¹ The authors specify that reflective and reflexive, at this stage in the book, are synonymous terms.

5. Presentation of data

The data collected from the three interviews was coded and condensed during the analysis. What I realized during the analysis was that some of the topics that came out were consistent with the ones found in the literature review. I was tempted to make the same categories in this chapter, but looking closer at the data made me realize that despite the fact that the same categories are present, this data demands a different sorting. I realized that «Mental health», being one of four main categories in the literature review, is in fact suitable as the main heading for all of the data. Dealing with emotions and identity, and using music to better understand certain developmental and cognitive processes made the whole interviews about the relationship between the interviewees' use of music in relation to their mental health. Having acknowledged this, I started looking for themes that could help me sort the data. I ended up with two main themes: Emotions and identity. It can of course be argued that emotions also play a great role in someone's identity, but in this case the theme «emotions» deals with the data concerning the processing of, and dealing with emotions in the music, and in relation to the music. Identity as a theme will deal with the data that concerns identifying with either persons, communities and symbols, or the music itself, and it's content. As seen below (see Figure 3), «Emotions» has three sub-themes, and identity four. Mood management proved to be a very important part of what the music gives the listeners, being directly related to a

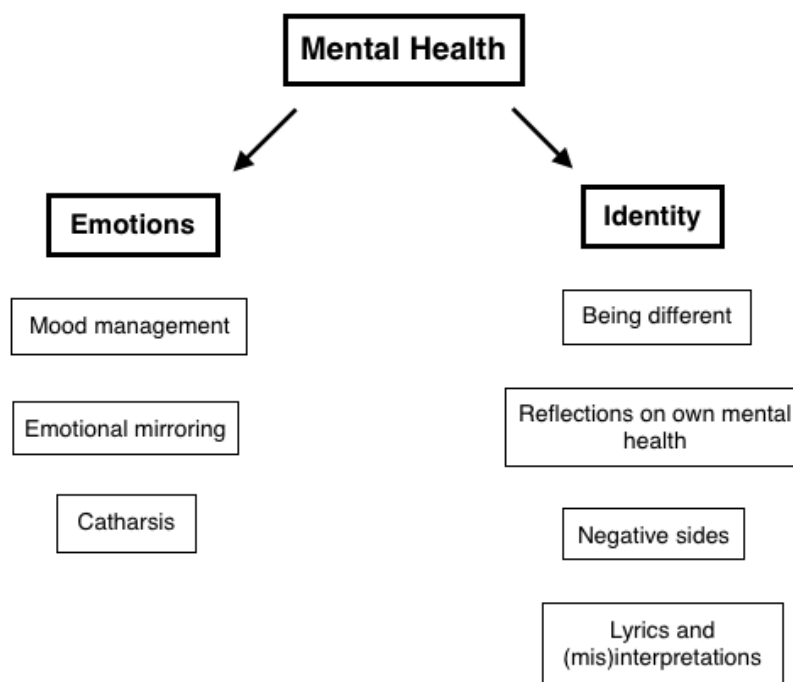


Figure 3, *Findings*

person's emotions. Also «Catharsis» is very much related to mood management, but perhaps in a deeper sense. As Snorre mentions in his interview, heavy metal is very much about intense and concentrated emotions, confirming the importance of emotional arousal and controlling of emotions in relation to heavy metal.

Identity stood out as the other big theme in my findings. It seems that very much in the use of music can be traced back to the development of identity. The given themes could also be placed in the emotions-section, or in between the two, but they appeared to me as having a special importance for my interviewees' sense of identity.

Even though they have some similarities, the three interviews were quite different. The length of the answers varied, and so did the need for follow-up questions. Both Snorre and Hallgeir had long and apparently very reflected answers. Truls gave shorter answers and could sometimes give two different answers if one question was repeated. Additional questions were then required in order to find out if one of the answers were consistent. There can be many reasons for this. Firstly, both Snorre and Hallgeir are or have been university students, whereas Truls, as the youngest participant is still in school. It should be mentioned that Truls' school specializes in challenged adolescents. Most students there appear to lack motivation or have a difficult background history and they find the regular school system very challenging. I did not go into it, but my impression is that Truls goes to this school because the school's practical way of learning suits him better than that of a conventional school. At a university level the challenges are of a different nature than in school. My experience is that as a university student one's thoughts and beliefs are questioned, potentially resulting in profound reflections on some questions. The two university students might be used to thinking in a deeper sense about questions. Another reason could be that both Hallgeir and Snorre showed great interest in my project and personally addressed me to ask if I needed informants. Their engagement started small conversations that might have given hints about questions that would be asked in the interviews. Some of their answers actually seemed quite prepared and Snorre also admitted to have prepared some answers. Truls on the other hand had not properly read through the information given in forehand, and learned the context of the interview only moments before doing it as we went through it together. This was despite the brief information given at the time of recruitment and the written information given prior to the interview. My relationship to Hallgeir and Snorre is as a friend or someone I share interests with, and I regard them as peers. With Truls the

relationship is different as I have had the role of an adult, and him more like a student whenever we met.

Another important difference between Truls and the two other informants is that Truls, at the moment of the interview, was at a stage where he used heavy metal in his daily life, whilst the other two rather looked back at when heavy metal had a greater importance in their lives. As a whole I would say that Truls' interview did stand out on several areas. I do not consider it less valid for that reason, and I consider the significant differences as important findings. Due to the briefness of Truls' answers and their inconsistency, the amount of quotes is smaller from him than that from the others. I have nevertheless tried to compensate for this with my own interpretations of what he experienced, based on what he said.

All the following quotes from the interviews are my own translations from Norwegian to English. Long pauses, stuttering and other typical oral details have been removed in order to make the quotes more fluent. Also some minor grammatical adjustments have been made in the translation process from Norwegian to English. In the presentation of the data through quotes, all three interviewees in addition to myself are presented by our initial letters. T is then Truls, S is Snorre, H is Hallgeir and M is myself (Mikael). This is mainly to keep the focus on the quotes themselves while reading through.

5. 1. Emotions

«Emotions» is one of the two main headings in this chapter. As mentioned heavy metal's energy and emotion is such a prevailing element in the music that it makes it perhaps the most important one. Under this heading the interviewees' experiences in relation to the emotions in and around the music will be presented. How the expressed emotions in the music are used in relation to mood management and how they can be a source of reflections and processes within the listener.

5. 1. 1. Heavy metal and mood management

One topic that showed important early on was the use of music, and in these cases specifically heavy metal, as a needs of managing moods. In the following extract from the interview with Hallgeir, I ask in what situations he listens to heavy metal:

M: When do you listen to heavy metal?

H: It could be on a real victory rush where i'm like «YESS! Here we go! I need to get even more of this awesome music». For example «Ace of Spades» [Motörhead] is a little like «WOH! Give me the rush man!» Awesome, right? Thats one example. You get more happy from that kind of energizing, wild music.

Here Hallgeir describes how the music amplifies his positive emotions. As Wheeler (1985) suggests, this could simply be because Hallgeir chooses to listen to music that he enjoys. All informants mentioned the energy level of heavy metal as something that attracts them. Hallgeir describes the music as something positive. He expects the music to be positive which could be the reason why he experiences it as such. Also the lyrics can play a role in mood management. Snorre mentions the importance of the lyrics and how they can make a song positive.

M: What do you like the most and least about heavy metal?

S: The most positive is that it has a lot of energy, and with the right lyrics and so on it can give you a lot of positivity. A lot of positive energy and confidence.

What Snorre here describes could be what Galizio & Hendrick (1972) suggested, namely that music intensifies the affect conveyed in the music. There is a lot of emotion and energy in heavy metal, and if this is channelled in a positive direction, like Snorre describes, this would boost the positivity of the lyrics. Snorre's focus was very much on the positivity he got from the music, and he also showed me an example of positive lyrics in heavy metal that will be presented later in this chapter. As a contrast to this, Truls admitted that heavy metal could have a negative effect on him:

M: You mentioned that heavy metal can be bad for you..?

*T: Yes, sometimes I get tired of it. I then put on some hip hop or something else. Sometimes it's just... they growl in metal, and the growling sometimes makes me crazy. You don't always like it. Some people like it. I actually think it's too much noise. I like a lot of noise, but this is too noisy because of the yelling, the growling. It does something to you. It's strange listening to it. I also want to listen to it, but actually I think it's strange. (...)
Sometimes I get tired of it and a little angry.*

M: Because you've had enough?

T: Sometimes I get angry for no reason when I listen to music.

M: Can you get angry like this from listening to other musical styles?

T: No, I don't. Usually when I get sad or angry I'm at home and then I put on some other music that calms me down.

What Truls here describes could be interpreted as ambivalence towards heavy metal music. He likes certain elements of it, but he also notices how it can have a negative influence on his mood. Later in the interview Truls made the distinction between different types of metal. For instance «black metal» was not the metal of his choice. He preferred «metal core» or «death core». Both have more singing and less growling than black metal. This can also be an example of what McFerran and Saarikallio (2014) describe as a responsibility and awareness in music listening. When Truls experienced heavy metal as something negative, he stopped listening to it and put on something that would calm him down. This being said, Truls repeatedly mentioned how heavy metal made him feel tough, and that it was a reason for listening to it. Gangster rap and heavy metal were the two genres he preferred because they made him feel tough.

5. 1. 2. Emotinoal mirroring

Hallgeir repeatedly mentioned that the music is a reflection for him. When asking more about this, he explained that it is like a mirror that reflects his emotions. If he feels sad or unhappy certain songs «fit» perfectly with what he feels. He prompted the relationship between lyrics and music that should be matching to best illustrate these emotions, a matching that is more or less successful, depending on the band.

Snorre described a certain simplicity in heavy metal. It illustrates raw power, raw aggression. There are very few emotions expressed in the music. This way the ones being expressed are more concentrated.

S: I'm always looking for a new band that can show me pure energy. That's probably the reason why my interest for heavy metal has gradually faded. Metal is often just one emotion at a time, and just one. A band that only plays on aggression gets kind of boring after a while because you don't just have that emotion, you have lots of other emotions too. I think metal fits very well if you're very happy because it then is a lot of positive energy. I enjoy listening to metal, but other music goes up and down and shows different emotional aspects...

He later goes back to this thought and says that heavy metal shows no signs of vulnerability either. It is concentrated power. Because of this he thinks it might also be easier to relate to for adolescents in difficult times. They might choose to focus on certain emotions that are more present than others. «Maybe because it's cool or not» Snorre says. Snorre's experience was that when he got older he wanted more emotions in the music. He started exploring jazz and fusion as well as progressive rock and progressive metal. These reflect a more diverse emotional spectrum that perhaps followed the emotions experienced by Snorre at the time.

Snorre's reflections from his adolescence made him recall a time period when he had difficulties falling asleep at night. Going to bed at night he would feel stressed because he couldn't sleep, causing even more difficulties falling asleep. This ruined his days and he would spend large amounts of time during the day dreading nightfall when the fight against insomnia would continue. This continued until he at some stage decided not to fight it anymore, but rather go along with it. He decided to spend the nights reading books instead. The fact that he accepted the problem ended up resolving it. Once he accepted the problem he was more relaxed and would fall asleep while reading. After a few days the problem was gone. Snorre compares this important experience from his life with his dealing with other problems in life using heavy metal. He says it's about accepting the problem rather than pushing it away. It's the same with music:

S: Say you are a person who struggles and you constantly try to hide it away. In that case it might help listening to aggressive music because you will address the topic you struggle with and it will make you process it more easily than if you just try to push away your problems by listening to happy music.

Snorre here draws in the happy music he experienced from the radio and general popular culture that he did not identify with. He states that pretending that everything is fine when it isn't is not the best solution, and that this might be what many people are doing when they keep listening to music to make them feel happier.

As mentioned, Truls feels tough when listening to heavy metal. This could be a reflection of his present emotions, but it might also be a «mental support». Considering Truls' present life situation this is an interesting topic that will be more thoroughly investigated in the discussion chapter.

5. 1. 3. Catharsis

As the literature review suggests, there are different opinions on catharsis, or whether it exists at all. This is at least from the researchers' point of view. My interviewees describe a process very similar to that of catharsis, if not identical. None of them ever use the word catharsis, but words such as «outlet», «getting out aggression» and «venting» were frequent. Truls mostly experiences this venting when combining heavy metal and exercise. Snorre on the other hand saw this as something that happened in his head. A theoretical outlet as he said:

M: If you didn't have metal in this tough period... what do you think about that?

S: Difficult to say. I guess I would have kept it more inside. Im not saying that I let it out, because I didn't. I didn't play in a band, I didn't go to gigs and jumped up and down. Everything happened in my head. Except for when I sang out loud or ran or rode my bike whilst listening to music. Then you get a physical outlet. But usually it was just a theoretical outlet; you hear lyrics about people who have difficulties and then you sympathize with them and that aggression and you feel that there's someone out there who feels the same way as you. That helps.

Snorre describes how the music alone and the cognitive processes that followed it was enough to get out his aggression. As he points out he rarely practiced any physical activity in combination with the music, and he did not do any of the «rituals» that often go with a heavy metal community or heavy metal concerts (Recours et al., 2009). Hallgeir describes his listening to heavy metal as something that prevented him from being physically aggressive:

H: ...Again that frustration, the reflection and the fact that it wasn't specifically like «now I feel better», but like I said earlier, like an outlet for aggression instead of going at something physical, going mental or destroying something... I become kind of aggressive, and getting it out through another medium has helped me.

Hallgeir said this when asked about his difficult time in adolescence. In contrast to Snorre, Hallgeir played in a band during all of his adolescence. When asked what playing in the band gave him he described it much in the same way as when listening to some fantastic music. He actually made the comparison and said that a good band practice felt the same way as discovering some really

amazing new music. Yet, he also says that the positive feeling experienced when playing in a band is perhaps more intense than the one you get from music listening.

Snorre points out that he never «used» the music for anything. At least he wasn't aware of it. He put on the music because he wanted to, not because he felt that he had to get out some aggression. As he explains:

S: It really helped getting this help from the music to get out aggression in a non-violent way that was alright. I don't have anything specific like instead of hitting someone I went and put on a track, but it was more on an everyday basis that it functioned as a vent. I think vent is a good word to use.

For Snorre heavy metal was more like an everyday vent. He later also describes how he could sit on the bus home after a bad day at school and feel better from listening to heavy metal music.

Hallgeir's experiences are described as more intense it seems. Perhaps this is just due to the nature of Snorre and Hallgeir's different characters, but Hallgeir described his experiences with very much passion and emotion. This could of course also be because Snorre, at the time of the interview rarely listened to heavy metal, whilst Hallgeir still does frequently and also plays in a heavy metal band. Hallgeir used the word «self-medication» several times throughout the interview. In the following quote he describes it as a self-medication for aggression:

H: ...it becomes like a kind of self-medication in a way. And that often results in me feeling better. In the sense that when I am pissed and listen to pissed music it doesn't result in me being even more pissed, to put it that way. It's more like «AAAAH» (relieved sigh). It's like yelling into a pillow. Negative and negative equals positive.

The fact that he did not experience feeling more angry from listening to angry music, but rather the opposite contradicts some critical literature on the topic (see for example Bushman, 2002). Of course, these are the experiences of a few informants that should not be representative for everyone, but for discussion this might indicate how people are different and have different experiences.

5. 2. Identity

«Identity» is the second of the two main headings in this chapter. It is longer than the previous, and deals with a topic that stands out as a very important part of the music listening. Again, it should be mentioned that the following part does not exclude the emotional aspect of the music, but rather deals with it in relations to the interviewee's identity, and how he viewed and views himself.

As I suspected heavy metal was important for my informants' identity, but perhaps this was not in the way I had expected. Thinking about a typical «metal head» one might see black clothes, chains and leather, even dark make up sometimes. The interviewees do mention dressing this way to a certain degree, and identifying with peers doing the same thing or artists they looked up to, but the music also played deeper roles in building their identity.

When Truls was asked about his style he described it as a mix of heavy metal and hip hop. These are the two musical genres he referred to as making him feel tough. The rappers have a certain attitude that he would feel when listening to the music, and the power in heavy metal also had this effect. Talking about his past he mentions a person from child care that took care of him when he arrived to Norway. Truls later describes this person as being like a father to him. This person was also the one who introduced Truls to heavy metal.

M: Can you remember the first time you heard heavy metal?

T: It was in Norway when I was younger. It was because of a man called Jens. He drove me in his car and we went for walks and he put on heavy metal. He loves heavy metal he said. He used to put on Dummi Borgir or Slash or Metallica in the car, and I liked it. It was very different from the music I was used to in my culture, and i liked it more and more.

Later in the interview I asked him if Jens was then like an older brother for him. He answered: «A father I would say».

Both Snorre and Hallgeir were introduced to heavy metal by their older siblings, and Truls from someone he sees as a father figure. Perhaps this musical interest is a way of identifying with the natural models closer to them, and not just the artists and lyrics.

5. 2. 1. Being different

Hallgeir and Snorre both said they felt different as adolescents. Snorre felt misunderstood and was bullied and lonely. Hallgeir said he had lots of friends, but he had trouble accepting himself. He did not see how others would want to be with him, and he was very insecure. He hid this throughout his adolescence and never told anyone. Where Snorre was comfortable with himself, but others were not, Hallgeir was popular among peers, but not comfortable with himself. They both in a sense felt different from their peers, and the music could be a means of support and acknowledgment for them:

S: Usually the lyrics are about being comfortable with being different, feeling strong in being different, and not necessarily do as, or look like everyone else. It's about saying fuck you to those who try to hold you down from being who you are. This is something I took a lot of inspiration and pleasure in.

Truls said he started liking heavy metal because it was different from the music he knew from the culture he came from. Truls, typically having the physical looks of an Asian, and with a strong foreign accent, is the one with the most obvious differences from his peers. Yet, Hallgeir and Snorre were the ones who mentioned feeling most different. It should be mentioned that all three interviewees were attracted by heavy metal because it was so different from all other music they had heard before. This music expressed emotions that other music did not express. Hallgeir explained how heavy metal made him feel that he was not the only one liking this music:

H: It's just so satisfactory because it [heavy metal] complements something in me that makes me feel accepted. Knowing that this exists too, it was a kind of confidence boost for me, knowing that I wasn't alone liking this. I thought very few liked this, because especially in my childhood I was the only one who liked this music. But the music made me feel ok with that, I am different, and thats ok.

These quotes could illustrate how music can be what Ruud (2013) describes as objects of the self. It makes a supportive environment for the listener, making the investigation and acceptance of one's own emotions more tolerable. Hallgeir says that heavy metal was a kind of confidence boost for him. Truls and Snorre also experienced the music's influence on self-esteem and confidence. Truls quite simply explained it by saying that heavy metal makes him feel tough. He listens to it to feel

stronger and tougher and to more easily cope with challenges. For example he listens to heavy metal when working out. Snorre refers to the solidarity he feels with the artists singing about their difficult experiences that he recognizes from his own life.

5. 2. 2. Reflections on own mental health

Hallgeir and Snorre described using heavy metal to better understand their own mental state. The lyrics and emotions expressed in the music could express what they were feeling at the moment. The fact that someone put words and music to their emotions was something they found comforting, and also knowing that they were not the only ones feeling this way. Hallgeir here explains how listening to heavy metal could make him reflect on his own emotions:

H: The fact that another person was singing about it... You kind of get it retold or start to think about it yourself, and this again results in thoughts like: «how can I move away from this? How can I move on?». So it's in a way like self-therapy in that way.

By experiencing his own emotions from the point of view of someone else, he was able to better understand his emotional situation.

Another interesting description that was strikingly similar in both Hallgeir and Snorre's descriptions was how the music helped them reach the bottom. They both tell about making the choice of listening to heavy metal even if it worsened their mood and emotional state. The music made them go along with the negative emotions, investigating them and allowing them in order to fully understand them. Hallgeir describes this as a spiral that at some point stagnates. Reaching a certain point he has the choice between going further down, or dwelling on what he feels at that moment. This made him understand how low his emotional state was, making him try to improve it. Snorre's description is similar:

S: I feel it has something to do with following the emotion as deep as it will go, and not try to hide it away. If you're depressed and listen to depressed music you kind of go as far as it can go, and this way you drive away the emotion by not hiding away from it trying to avoid it, because if you actually confront it... I think it's more about addressing a negative emotion and addressing your problems by going deeper into that emotion and kind of think about «why am I in pain now?» and so on.

Both Snorre and Hallgeir describe this as confronting their problems and emotions, and not avoiding and suppressing them. This way they get a better understanding of their problem and can more easily find a solution to it. They also get a better understanding of themselves by getting to know their emotions.

Snorre describes heavy metal as keeping him company in difficult times. He was bullied in school and felt that no one understood him. The music could then, through lyrics in particular, tell him that he shouldn't be ashamed of who he is and that being different is a good thing. This would make him feel better and at the same time the music would help him «get out» aggression.

Truls describes his reflections as more practically oriented. Heavy metal has made him start playing instruments, and playing music in bands and solo is now the most important thing in his life. It has not only given him an occupation, but also a network of friends that he probably wouldn't have unless he played this kind of music.

5. 2. 3. Negative sides

When asked about possible negative effects of heavy metal, all informants got eager. Some even got quite defensive at first. Truls showed a more diplomatic approach. He mentioned an ambivalence even before the interview had started. His conclusion was simply that heavy metal sometimes can be good for you, and sometimes it can be bad for you. He personally experienced both, but as mentioned he could feel when it was bad for him and he thus switched to something that could calm him down. The image of the music is very important for Truls. The music sounds dangerous, therefore lyrics should be about dangerous things such as fighting:

M: What do you think the songs should be about?

T: It has to be something horrible, fighting... something like that.

M: Why?

T: Because if you for example played a children's song in heavy metal style, would that fit?

(Laughing)

Truls points out that it could seem silly to put children's songs' lyrics to heavy metal music. The lyrics should reflect the emotions expressed in the music.

Hallgeir has also experienced heavy metal as having a negative effect. In bad periods he would go «all the way» down into the dark emotions. This resulted in some really bad days before it gradually got better. He explained that he learned that the consequence was that he would feel bad, so he tried to understand what he could do to avoid this.

All informants understood how heavy metal could have negative effects. Snorre explains how, like in any musical genres, there are many different bands. Some actually sing about fighting and murder as something to worship. He sees them as ridiculous and childish bands. Unfortunately, some vulnerable kids could start listening to this, and it might influence them in very bad ways. Nevertheless, he later stated that music alone is not what creates bad people:

S: People are mentally ill and people have problems, but it's not the music's fault. It really isn't. Of course there can be bad communities, but bad communities do not come from music. Bad communities come from bad actions, philosophy of life and bad people. It's not inspired by music. It comes from difficulties. And the fact that people aren't capable of processing, or that people can't process their problems like they should. In these cases I rather think metal can be of help.

This statement led us into talking about the shock rocker Marilyn Manson who was blamed by some for the Columbine shooting in 1999 (Moore, 2002). Two adolescent boys shot and killed 13 persons and injured several more in a school in Columbine, Colorado. Marilyn Manson responded to this in much the same way as Snorre did in the interview, saying that the music was the only thing these kids could relate to. No one else would understand them or listen to them, suggesting that the real cause of the tragedy was that the boys were lonely and felt misunderstood. Parents and community were not there when they were needed, the only thing the boys had was each other and the music.

5. 2. 4. Lyrics and (mis)interpretations

Snorre early on in the interview prompted his interest in the lyrics. Even though all three interviewees said the music was more important than the lyrics, the lyrics were not far behind. They all also prefer when the lyrics reflect the emotions expressed in the music. Truls said he likes it when the songs are about bad things, dangerous things, such as fighting or satanism. Following up

the latter, Truls said he was not a satanist at all. In fact he thought satanism was a strange thing. In his view, satanism was just fantasy, an image or a style for the band, but some people also take it literally:

M: You said satanism. What do you think about that?

T: It's strange in a way.

M: Do you like it?

T: No (laughing). It's just a fun thing to listen to.

M: Do you think the people who write about satanism mean it?

T: It's just an image in the music. The guy who made the first metal band in Norway was a real satanist. He burned churches... what was his name...?

M: Varg Vikernes?

T: Yes. He is extreme. He is a satanist. I never liked listening to that kind of music. I can write about satanism, but just a little bit. I don't like satanism.

From what I can understand, Truls sees a difference between satanism as a faith, or life philosophy, and the kind that is only an image. He likes the kind that is an image, or a style, because it reflects emotions in the music that he can relate to, but he does not like the practicing kind of satanism. Snorre has similar thoughts. He describes black metal, the metal genre that is usually associated with satanism, as fantasy. Even though black metal wasn't his favorite genre, he listened to some of it. He tells about a friend who's view on black metal he liked:

S: ...I had a colleague, a very positive person, kind of hippie-like. She loves black metal because it's like fantasy [literature]. It's a kind of fairy tale. It tells about another world, an exciting kind of world where you have costumes and so on. So it's very clear for all who engage in metal that none of it is real, it's kind of like Lord of the Rings in music.

This relates to something Snorre said earlier about adolescents being mature enough to understand what is real and what is not, and what is bad and what is good. As he said, most adolescents are capable of sorting out what's good and what's bad. The few that aren't capable of this are the ones that might be negatively influenced by the music. Hallgeir also talks about this and says that there are not more bad people in metal than there are in pop music. He points out that also movies and books (referring to a book by Salvador Dali, but no title or further details) can influence people to

take their own, or others' lives. Hallgeir also talked about people literally misunderstanding lyrics, either they don't get the irony, or they just don't listen properly to the lyrics, and make their own meanings based on expectations. For example Hallgeir talks about «Suicide Solution» by Ozzy Osbourne. He tells about an adolescent who took his own life. The parents blamed Ozzy Osbourne and the song, but in fact that song's lyrics are about how stupid a solution suicide is. Again, all three interviewees said that misinterpretations and misunderstandings from song lyrics are a great cause of the negative reputation of heavy metal.

Snorre wanted to share some lyrics with me to give an example of positive lyrics in heavy metal. He made a clear distinction between bad and good lyrics and preferred the good ones. The following is from the track Snorre showed me; «Supernova» by Fear Factory:

This ever changing world, ever changing me
It feels new pathways for my soul to see
It lights so bright, so bright in your eyes
Casting off the shadows that darken your mind

5. 3. Summary

The general opinion among my informants was that indeed heavy metal music was experienced as something positive in their adolescence. Perhaps the term positive resource is relevant. A lot of the literature read does not agree with this view, but it could also be argued that these three persons' experiences are perhaps more pragmatic than those made in a research «lab» context. Either for mood management or a tool for mentalizing, or an identity, the interviewees' experiences from heavy metal are a part of this qualitative study that focuses on persons who have had a specifically positive effect from heavy metal, at least as they see it.

Some of the processes or phenomena described by my interviewees do not fit into the literature from the literature review, and requires some more investigation. These elements will be further investigated in the following discussion and viewed in relation to the theories presented earlier. This will perhaps help understand the underlying processes my informants went through while listening to heavy metal and thus also help me find ways of applying this to a more clinical music therapy context.

6. Discussion

As presented in the previous chapter, it seems the interviewees have a reflected relation to heavy metal music. Even though Snorre and Hallgeir showed what can be understood as more profound reflections, also Truls showed a certain responsibility in relation to his use of heavy metal. In this chapter the data will be discussed in relation to the relevant theories that might suggest a theoretical explanation of what the interviewees experienced. Even though I use established theories to understand the data, it is important to keep in mind that all of this is based on my own interpretations of the data, which again is based on my pre-understanding. This chapter will also deal with the research questions that were presented following the literature review:

Main question:

How can heavy metal music be a positive resource in the lives of adolescents?

Follow-up question:

How can this be applied to music therapy?

These questions will be more specifically answered later in the chapter. To understand on what terms I answer these questions the following chapter will start by looking at the different elements that are relevant. The follow-up question concerning music therapy will be addressed after the answering of the first, and main questions. As mentioned, I hope to shed some light on the positive sides of heavy metal that it seems have been ignored by most researchers doing research on heavy metal and adolescents. From personal experiences as well as a previous literature review, I know that there can be positive effects from listening to heavy metal. I will now deal with theory that could explain how and why this is possible.

6. 1. Cognitive dissonance

As presented earlier, Leo Festinger's theory (1957) suggests an explanation of certain behaviors following certain events. The mismatch between one's own believes and reality can result in a conflict that might result in rationalization or in changing the believes of a person. The easiest way out of the conflict is to change your believes by rationalization so that they match the situation or behavior. Another more demanding way to attain consonance is to accept the dissonance and rather

try to change your behavior or the situation in order to avoid it. My informants seem to have chosen the second way out. Their honesty towards their own emotions and their integrity might actually be the cause of their difficulties. It would be dishonest towards themselves to go along with the majority of their peers if they felt differently. So in a sense they have shown strength in being different, which is something at least Snorre and Hallgeir mention they got from the music. Their cognitive dissonance originated from the mismatch between their environments and their emotional states. Snorre talked about the world around him constantly being so happy. Specially with social medias' functioning for many as a way of showing their successes. He experienced the world around him as not conforming with his world. Where he experienced loneliness, chaos and anger, the world around him expressed happiness and joy. Music on the radio had a happy beat, suggesting dancing and celebrating. Even songs with sad and angry lyrics often have cheerful melodies (for example Lily Allen's «Fuck You» from 2009).

Snorre specifically reflected upon the suppression of emotions. He's own experiences showed that trying to push away his problems could make them even worse. Denying the fact that he was struggling made him fear the problem. When talking about his sleep problems, he never mentioned any cause of it, and it seemed like he was unaware of the reason. It could even seem like the fact that he had trouble sleeping became the cause of it. Nevertheless, the situation did not improve until he accepted that he had a problem. Snorre mentioned this situation because he could see parallels to the way he used heavy metal. It helped him address his problems, allowing him to more easily process them. Suppressing the problems by trying to ignore them and hope they just disappeared was not the solution for Snorre. Bushman (2002) shows how changing the focus can reduce the amount of aggression within a person. But it is my belief that this is dependent on the problem. If there is a deeper conflict that indeed needs to be resolved, then this should be addressed and given the attention required, otherwise it might worsen and influence other areas of life (Freud, 1894).

Going back to the cognitive dissonance theory, one might say that the dissonance in these situations is of a more emotional nature. If considering the emotional states of the interviewees and the emotions expressed around them as the main source of the dissonance that is. But then their beliefs and understandings of the world they live in might also be the source of their emotional state. So the cognitive dissonance is then the source of the emotional discomfort of not being on the same emotional level as their surroundings. Dealing with this dissonance one might expect them to listen to more cheerful music that will make them feel happier. Nolen-Hoeksema et al. (2009) describe

this as hypocrisy. Doing something counter to what we believe, or in this case, to what we feel. Snorre, being true to his emotions, did not manage changing his emotional state to that of his surroundings. His best option was to change his surroundings so that they corresponded with his emotional state. The easiest way to do this was to change the soundtrack. Most of us have tried muting the TV while a scary scene is on. Once the music is gone it is not as scary anymore. Replacing the original scary music with a silly song could make the scene seem even less scary. This is to illustrate the power of a soundtrack. So, when Snorre listened to his heavy music he experienced the world around him as more corresponding with his emotions, thus relieving his emotional dissonance, or cognitive dissonance.

Truls mentioned feeling tough from listening to heavy metal. A possible explanation of this is that also he felt the world around him as tough. His situation is not an easy one, having come all alone as a child to a new country and having to adapt to its culture in order to fit in. This feeling of being tough from the music might be Truls' way of coping, or adapting to the world around him. The world can be a tough place to live, and the music not only helps him adjust his mental state to one that matches his surroundings, but it also gives him courage to get through difficult situations. The artists performing the kind of music mentioned by Truls, such as gangster hip hop and heavy metal, all show a certain attitude that Truls reported was the reason why he chose this music. He might try to identify with these artists in order to feel bigger and stronger like they appear.

6. 2. Catharsis

As has been stated in the method's chapter, psychoanalytic theory interests me and is an important part of my pre-understanding. It is my believe that the term catharsis could be replaced by other more modern terms that are not necessarily connected to psychoanalysis, for example «venting» or «emotional outlet». I believe the cathartic use of heavy metal is quite clear in the data presented, but I nevertheless want to comment on a few points. After all, it seems like catharsis is an important element to heavy metal music, giving it an important role when looking at the positive sides of the genre.

As stated Aristotle said that seeing emotions played out on a stage could have a healing effect on man (Aristotle, 2001, referred to in Powell n.d.). This suggests that even before psychoanalysis implied the word, it could refer to the external observation of emotions as a means of catharsis. This could mean that the personal acting out of an emotion is not necessarily needed. Referring to

Snorre, who was the only one of my informants who never played in a heavy metal band, this could confirm his experiences. He even described it as a theoretical outlet. Something that happened in his head, because he never went to concert venues to pogo or head-bang, and he never acted out the aggression on an instrument. He did mention combining it with physical activities at times, but usually he got the outlet from just listening to the music. Hearing the lyrics about people feeling the same way as himself helped him. As when seeing an emotion played out on stage, or on television for that sake, Snorre identified with the emotions expressed in the music. Theatre is a visual medium that perhaps gives a very concrete representation of situations and emotions. Music, being purely auditive, might stimulate us in different ways and perhaps allow a deeper recognition of emotions. There is a certain abstract nature to music that allows for the listener to create his own images. Allowing the listener to give the context to the music could give even deeper emotions than when viewing it.

6. 3. Exposure

Snorre and Hallgeir tell about the music giving them a chance to look at their own situations and emotions from a distance. The music expresses things they have experienced, and the fact that someone else puts it out makes them look at it from another perspective. As Snorre said, avoiding the problem is not the right way to deal with it. In relation to anxiety, exposure treatment has proved very efficient. Even though exposure treatment often is something encouraged, or even monitored by a cognitive therapist, it seems that Hallgeir and Snorre figured out their own ways. From what they have told it can be argued whether they have suffered from a slight anxiety in adolescence or not. Either way they both told about difficulties that might have been resolved with the help from heavy metal. The fact that they got access to their emotions from someone else allowed them to investigate them to better understand them. They confronted their problems instead of suppressing them. According to Hallgeir this made him start to look at possible ways out of the difficulties. Better understanding the problem allowed him to better find a solution to it. He knew that staying down in the darkness where the music could bring him would result in some miserable following days. Looking at heavy metal from the outside it might seem like this dark place is where the heavy metal fans want to be. By «dark place» I refer to a mental state that is dominated by negative emotions. Perhaps depression is a relevant term, or anxiety. From what my informants told in the interview, reaching this dark place is never the intended goal, at least not permanently. They do consciously seek these negative emotions, but that is to better understand themselves, their mental state and their emotions. It is all a part of a process that eventually is positive.

Using music in everyday life, it seems that my informants have succeeded in appropriating the affordances they needed for their specific challenges. The music seems to have become not only a help in coping for them, but also in growing and developing their reflexivity. Giving the listeners the role of a customized everyday medicine, music helped these listeners in dealing with deep emotional states and learning to understand themselves. Interestingly the listeners seem to have been the ones giving the music these affordances, showing that they somehow healed themselves. This is a profound way of musicking, and I see no reason why these affordances shouldn't also be available in other ways of musicking, such as composing and performing.

6. 4. Mirroring

The informants describe how heavy metal can be a good reflection of their emotional state. As discussed above, it is a way for them to see certain sides of themselves. When feeling angry or depressed they choose music that will reflect their present emotional state. When being happy, it seems the same kind of music amplifies the happy feeling. Hallgeir said that negative and negative makes positive, basic math.

There is a parallel between the emotional response of a mother to a child, and that of a therapist to a client (Løvlie-Schibbye, 2004). The mother's role is to reflect the child's emotions and to add something more to it, such as an explanation of it. «You are so angry because your toy was taken away». In therapy the therapist might stimulate the client to better understand his or her emotions through a dialogue. When listening to music it is not a dialogue, and the relational aspect is absent. The music does not react to the listener by challenging it or showing understanding. The listeners usually know what the music will give them. At least to a certain point. From what my informants told, there is reason to believe that the music indeed has the capability of giving the listeners more than just a reflection of their own emotions. The lyrics in the music put words to the emotions, and the music enhances this. What is conveyed in the tracks dealing with specific difficult emotions or situations might be the artist's own processing of a similar problem. At least this is what my interviewees got from it. Someone else put words to their emotions, and this made them see them and understand them more clearly. If this is the case the term «self-medication» used by Hallgeir is indeed very relevant.

Concerning the simplicity of emotions in heavy metal as described by Snorre, this might support the idea of the emotional mirror. Snorre explained that it was easier to relate to one emotion at that time, than the whole spectrum. The music might have served as a filter, focusing on the dominating emotions at that moment. Most things require learning, and most learning requires that we start off on an easy level. Heavy metal, expressing few and very clear emotions might be a safe place to start when learning to understand one's own emotions. Snorre said that he later felt the need of more variety in the emotions in the music, which is why he started listening to other genres. Perhaps this is because he felt he had mastered the understanding and dealing with of the emotional landscape of heavy metal, and that he was ready to proceed to the next level of emotional complexity. In this case heavy metal was just an appealing place to start the exploration of the emotional world of a boy, approaching a more mature psychological understanding of himself.

6. 5. Pleasure and responsibility

An important element to music that is not given much attention, especially not when talking about heavy metal, is the joy attained from listening to it. Eriksen (2012), doing his master thesis on adolescents getting music therapy in an alternative school, briefly talks about how his informants used music to get in a better mood. As also seen with my informants, this is not necessarily because of the emotions expressed in the music, but because they enjoy listening to music. Listening to details in the music, listening to the lyrics and trying to interpret them, discovering new music and perhaps sharing it with others. Listening to different stories whether from reality or from a fantasy world, it all has an entertainment value. These are elements that can enrich a person's life. It is an interest they have, and spending time doing it gives them joy. This is a very simple point, the fact that an occupation might better someone's life quality. Some people collect stamps, some play football, and some are fascinated by the world of heavy metal. In a culture where personal pleasure is a high priority, I find it hard to believe that someone would listen to a specific musical genre if it made them feel bad in the long term.

The listeners themselves are the ones who know best how the music makes them feel, and even though a lot of research shows that there is a connection between low mental health and frequently listening to heavy metal, I have not found any research proving that the music is the direct cause of the low mental health. If heavy metal is used as medicine as described by Hallgeir, then it's presence around people with low mental health should be a good thing. As with other medicine, there is use and there is abuse. Perhaps this is where McFerran and Saarikallio's (2014) view on the

responsibility of music listening gets relevant. Using medicine responsibly is considered safe, and I believe the same can be said about music.

All of my informants, and especially the youngest one, showed a responsibility when using heavy metal. Before the interview with Truls had even started he said that heavy metal can be good, but it can also be bad. He told from his own experiences how he felt when the music made him feel angry or sad, and that he in those situations changed the music so that it would make him feel better.

It's hard to say if the music causes the low mental health or if it's a way of coping with it. My findings could suggest both, as all my informants mentioned the negative potentials of heavy metal and acknowledged them. However they also appeared to treat the music with a certain respect and responsibility that could be what made it a positive resource for them rather than a negative one.

6. 6. Critical Reflections

My informants were considered relevant for this project because of their positive experiences with heavy metal. As stated above they all had experienced negative effects from heavy metal, or showed a clear understanding of how it can be negative to others. What strikes me was that Truls really emphasized the potential dangers of heavy metal. From Snorre and Hallgeir's point of view, the negative sides were just a part of a positive process, which might of course be the truth. It nevertheless strikes me how Truls' ambivalence towards the music was so prevalent. It almost appeared as though he felt more negative sides than positive ones. The only reasons he gave for listening to it was that it makes him feel tough and that it is different. Hallgeir and Snorre gave numerous arguments why it can be good. Truls mentioned several negative aspects that he personally experienced frequently. Hallgeir did however say something that points in the direction of an explanation for this. He said he remembers his adolescence as something negative and very challenging. The music he used to listen to at that challenging time now gives him positive associations because he knows it resulted in something good.

There is a possibility that Snorre and Hallgeir who are in a situation where they can look back at their most intense heavy metal days, simply choose the best memories, or the parts that resulted in something good as the ones worth keeping in mind. The context of the interviews might just have enhanced this effect. They knew they met up to talk about their positive experiences with heavy metal, and started thinking about all the good experiences which might have suppressed the bad

ones. At times during the interviews they also gave the impression of really wanting to show that heavy metal is good, and as a result they might have let out the most negative stories. These are of course speculations, but it's nevertheless striking that Truls as the only one currently in the intense heavy metal phase and in adolescence also was the only one to be that critical about the music.

In the end they all did manage to give the impression that heavy metal was a crucial part of their lives and that it helped them more than it damaged them. I do not doubt their honesty in the interviews, and I believe that their answers were their sincere experiences. Perhaps this is something that is too little considered when determining whether a musical genre is good or bad for someone. The fact that they experienced it as something positive is in my opinion reason enough to take it seriously as something that might have positive effects on people.

6. 7. Heavy metal *as* therapy

In this part of the discussion I have not yet included the music therapist. I am currently discussing the music's benefits without the music therapist, in a way the music as a therapist of its own. According to Bruscia's (1998) definition of music therapy a therapist is involved. None of my informants had any contact with therapists during the time described in the interviews, however they all describe therapeutic effects from the music, and Hallgeir even calls it therapy on several occasions. This may not be music therapy as described by Bruscia, but certain therapeutic elements are indeed present. The music is the main agent for therapeutic change in this case, and my informants put great emphasis on the emotional aspects of the music. However they also reported getting a feeling of empathy from the singer, feeling that someone understood what they felt and that they weren't alone. They felt strengthened from the support they experienced from the music and its lyrics, and Snorre reported feeling credited by the singers for daring to be different by being himself. What my informants described was that they experienced heavy metal *as* therapy.

Looking at the relational aspects one can say that the primary relationship enhanced by the music for my informants is the interpersonal relationship (as described by Bruscia, 1998). Through music listening they accessed greater knowledge about their true emotions. This might be understood as forming a stronger relationship between their emotions and their thoughts, resulting in a better knowledge of themselves. Bruscia (1998) describes interpersonal relationships as existing between two persons, and may for example be between one person's behavior and another person's response. I believe interpersonal relationships too can be said to be present in some situations described by

my informants. The lyrics in the music often describe situations and actions, and a relationship is then made between this action or situation and the listener's response. Intramusical relationships are more connected to the relationships within the music created by one person, and this is not very relevant here. This also applies to intermusical relationships that concern the relationships that occur between two persons' played music. Both sociocultural and environmental relationships are on the other hand relevant. Bruscia's examples to describe sociocultural relationships are the relationships between «the client's music, and the music of his heritage; the client's thoughts, and the client's religion» (Bruscia, 1998, p. 128).

Skånland (2011) found that music listening can function as coping resource on internal and external levels. My findings confirm this, and especially the internal factors are prevalent. Snorre and Hallgeir mostly talked about what heavy metal did/does to their inner emotions and helped them process difficulties. Truls focused more on the external factors and how heavy metal made him feel tough and gave him a certain attitude that could help him cope with challenging situations. Regarding the music's affordances (DeNora, 2000), it seems that my informants had no problems appropriating them thus getting a lot from the music. This is one of the points where a music therapist might have been a good resource, in helping appropriating the music's affordances so that it is as constructive as possible.

6. 8. Conclusive Remarks

Considering my findings through the literature review, the interviews and my analysis, I believe answers to my research questions are getting clearer. As for the first question: *How can heavy metal music be a positive resource in the lives of adolescents?* I already knew from personal experience that heavy metal *can* be a positive resource. I therefore did not spend time finding out *if* it can be a positive resource, but rather *how*. Addressing this question I believe the past few chapters have given good explanations as to how it can be positive. In short terms one can say that it allows for a better understanding of one's own emotions, that it can participate in resolving a cognitive dissonance, that it can serve as an outlet for difficult emotions, that it can have a positive effect on self-esteem and that it can be a great source of pleasure and entertainment for the listener.

The second question: *How can this be applied to music therapy?* has not yet been addressed, and it seems it requires a more comprehensive answer. The following part will deal with this question and look at what and how elements from heavy metal can be beneficial in a music therapeutic process.

7. Implications for Music Therapy

Until this stage, the focus has mainly been on the listener's experience of heavy metal. If we view the music as simply an object, there are no relational aspects and no intersubjectivity. Accepting that the music can in fact evoke certain relational elements, such as empathy, comforting, or even reflecting one's own mental states, the music suddenly gets more power and as a certain superhero would say: with great power comes great responsibility. The elements presented above as a part of the music/listener-dyad might in fact get a more beneficial value if monitored by a music therapist. Also, a music therapist can reveal other elements from the music that can give the listener even more benefits from it. In the following chapter I will look at how the positive elements described by my informants can be implied to music therapy. I will primarily focus on single sessions rather than group sessions. This is because I believe the single session format has more similarities with the use of music of my informants, making it a natural starting point.

I want to make it clear that I will not look at the possibility of the music therapist replacing heavy metal. Of course, this could be interesting as the therapist might indeed offer an emotional outlet, emotional mirroring, empathy and recognition, but being such an important part of my informant's identities, their musical taste should be recognized and investigated rather than replaced. As my music therapy training is much resource oriented, it has become natural for me to include this orientation in my work. I believe the therapist should be flexible in order to take different roles depending on the needs of the client. If the client needs strict rules and systematic working they should get it, and if the client just needs someone that will understand them and listen to them, that's what they should get.

7.1 Heavy metal *in* therapy

Including a therapist into this process offers a range of possibilities that were perhaps not as accessible if the client were to go through this alone. My informants described their use of the music as mainly receptive. They listened to the music and got various effects from it. When a music therapist is involved a range of other possibilities are available.

Seeing how important the therapeutic relationship is in psychotherapy, I also expect it to be equally important in music therapy. The music can be used as something that exists between the therapist and the client, or it can be a third part, that the therapist and client explore together. The latter would probable strengthen the therapeutic relationship to greater extent as it opens up for shared experiences and thus an intersubjective relatedness. This therapeutic relationship is, as far as I can see the most prominent difference between including a music therapist and not doing so. My informants described loneliness and insecurity as issues in adolescence that were addressed through heavy metal. Even though they were capable of feeling recognition and understanding in the musical lyrics, their relationship to the artists was not mutual. The artists can in no way adapt their music to the needs of the listener. A music therapist could do this if for example improvising together with the client.

It seems like all the positive effects experienced by my informants can be included into a music therapeutic setting, but it would then include the important element of intersubjectivity. I do not believe that the music therapist necessarily has to be a heavy metal fan. The sharing of subjective experiences, whether similar or not, is either way a good way of establishing a good intersubjective relatedness. As Løvlie-Schibbye (2004) says, intersubjective relatedness promotes self-development, raises self-understanding and gives the individual access to its own self-processes. We have already seen that heavy metal alone has given my informants these benefits. This could be because they experience an intersubjective relatedness with the music. They share experiences and emotions with those expressed in the music, resulting in a better self-understanding and better self-esteem. All of these are important elements for a person's sense of identity.

My informants all seem to have coped well with challenges using heavy metal as support. For those not lucky enough to appropriate heavy metal's affordances in such a constructive way, the music therapist could be a resource to learn how to use heavy metal in a constructive way. With this in mind I would like to suggest four main elements to heavy metal whose beneficial value can be strengthened by a music therapist: Interpretation of lyrics, exploration of emotions, exploring limits, and channelling energy (see figure 3). In a music therapy context all these elements are strengthened by the therapeutic relationship. The main difference between using heavy metal as a positive resource alone, and using it in music therapy is the fact that there is a possibility of establishing a therapeutic relationship. As shown below the therapeutic relationship is then the main strength of music therapy as opposed to listening to heavy metal alone. The therapeutic relationship

has great influence on what happens in music therapy and also makes an important common point between them. Working with these four elements; lyrics, emotions, limits and energy can therefore also strengthen the therapeutic relationship through shared experiences. The following section will deal with the elements illustrated in figure 4 to give a better understanding of their roles and potentials.

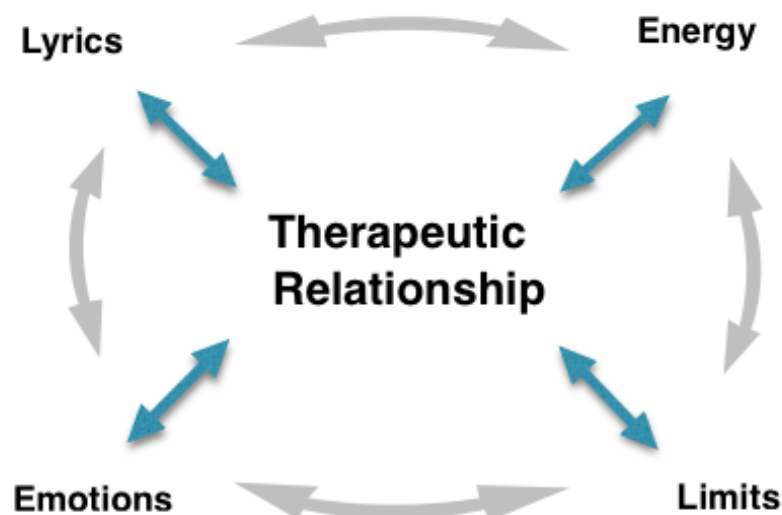


Figure 4, *Focus Areas for Music Therapy*

7. 1. 1. Interpretation of lyrics

All informants seemed to have a critical approach to the lyrics in the music. They saw a distinction between good and bad lyrics, where the bad ones could have negative influences on them. Hallgeir and Snorre also mentioned misinterpretations as source of negative impressions of the music. Many adolescents don't read the lyrics and given the image of the music they can easily understand them as more negative than they are. Exploring these lyrics together with a music therapist may be a good way to raise awareness about the meanings of the lyrics, but it can also help the client be more critical to the lyrics and what the artists represent. This can also open up for the writing of own lyrics, either as a parody on a tune they know, or as a new song. Giving the client an awareness of the meanings of the lyrics and the effect they can have could thus be a focus when working with the lyrics.

7. 1. 2. Exploration of emotions

As Hallgeir and Snorre experienced the music helped them understand their own emotions. They could follow the music down to their darkest emotions and learn to understand them and deal with them. Accepting such dark emotions can be a very frightening thing to do. A music therapist could offer company and support in this frightening quest. Conversations concerning these emotions can give an even greater understanding, whether explored verbally or musically. A music therapist can accompany the client down to the core of the negative emotions, and help him better understand them and deal with them. In cases of insecurity the music therapist can provide the security and safety required.

7. 1. 3. Exploring the limits

Truls knew when he'd had enough heavy metal. He then put on different music that would calm him down. He was able to feel his limits and act accordingly. Hallgeir also saw this limit. He said that going further down demanded a certain commitment to the dark emotions, and could potentially be destructive. It seems like there is a limit for what my informants could take of heavy metal. Truls even said he went crazy if he listened too much to it. A music therapist could focus on finding this limit together with the client and thus learn responsible listening. This is directly related to what McFerran and Saarikallio (2014) suggest, that responsibility and awareness could be the key to beneficial music listening. Heavy metal obviously has the potential to cause problems, just as other musical genres, and learning how to use its positive sides, and when to avoid it, is crucial for a beneficial use of the music.

7. 1. 4. Channeling the energy

Snorre said that one of the things he likes the most about heavy metal is that if it is used the right way, it can be a great source of positive energy. The energy in heavy metal is an obvious and quite characteristic element of it. This can be used in a negative way, causing aggression and restlessness, but it can also be used as positive energy such as that described by Snorre. Learning to channel this energy in a positive direction rather than a negative one can make it a positive resource. Truls for example used it for work out, and Hallgeir to amplify a victory rush. They also used this energy to get out aggressive emotions, as a catharsis. Providing a safe environment to explore this energy and its capacities, a music therapist can help in raising awareness about the use of it.

7. 1. 5. The therapeutic relationship

As mentioned earlier the therapeutic relationship is the most important element to provide therapeutic change. This is also, from what I can see, the most important difference between using music alone and using it in music therapy. The therapeutic relationship becomes the central and most important element in music therapy. This can of course be strengthened in many ways, but learning to understand heavy metal can be a good place to start. This can even be done together with the client, using the client's own resources as an expert on the field.

The therapeutic relationship can be seen as the core of these four elements in music therapy, influencing all of them but equally being influenced by them. The music is the main agent in building a good therapeutic relationship in this context, giving it a critical role in the process. It is important that the client feels seen, understood and recognized by the therapist (Løvlie-Schibbye, 2004). Considering that recognition can reveal something new in the other, and that it participates in the building of self-confidence, it is a very important element to the therapeutic relationship. Finally the music therapist can adapt to the client's needs in a way impossible for pre-recorded music. The listener may adapt his choice of music to the situation, or to what he feels is required at the moment, but the music is always performed by someone else that is not present at that moment. A music therapist can be present and ready to give the client whatever is required in a way pre-recorded music never could.

7. 2. Conclusive Remarks

Addressing the second part of my research question: *How can this be applied to music therapy?*, I have made an attempt to sort out the main characteristic elements in heavy metal based on my findings. The most obvious distinction between what was described by my informants and a music therapy setting is the presence of another person in the process. Focusing on this distinction the significance of the therapeutic relationship is seen in relation to what heavy metal can offer. I have suggested four main elements based on my findings: lyrics, emotions, limits and energy. These stood out as important elements in what my informants told me. Based on the theory presented I see two main answers to this question that are both related to the four elements presented: one is the therapeutic relationship, already given a lot of attention, and the other is learning responsible music listening by raising awareness around the power of music.

So to answer the question above my answer would be: *Heavy metal can be a positive resource in the lives of adolescents, and it can be applied to music therapy by using it as tool in building a good therapeutic relationship, and by learning to use heavy metal responsibly through reflections and explorations.* This last point is, as described by McFerran & Saarikallio (2014), important to distinct between music listening being positive or negative for adolescents. They suggest that the difference between getting positive and negative effects from music listening is dependent on whether the listener is capable of reflecting on his use of music or not. Music therapy can be a great environment to explore and reflect on the music in order to make its use positive.

I realize that my answer does not focus very much on the music therapy session and specific methodology. I mainly focus on what can give a vulnerable adolescent that enjoys heavy metal the same awareness, and thus benefits, as my informants got from it. What McFerran & Saarikallio (2014) did not write about was the relationship adolescents had to this «trouble music» ten years later. My findings could suggest that the deep reflections making the music beneficial present themselves more clearly at an older age, when the turbulence of adolescence is more distant and its processes become clearer. The scale of my project is of course too small to give any universal answer to this, but it could be interesting as an experiment to ask Truls the same questions he as was asked in this interview in 5-10 years. If what I am suggesting is true, he will be able to look back at his adolescent relationship to heavy metal in a more reflected way, having resemblance with the answers given by Snorre and Hallgeir.

This project is too small to be considered significant, however it does suggest that heavy metal has more positive potentials than what a lot of research give the impression of.

8. Summary

This master thesis has from the start focused on heavy metal's positive potentials. A rather comprehensive literature review revealed that there is little literature focusing on heavy metal in particular, and even less focusing on the positive sides of it. Through the interviews of three young men, all describing heavy metal as an important or crucial part of their lives, I have been able to explore this musical genre and what impact it can have on people. My findings suggest that, with the right approach, heavy metal can help adolescents develop and learn to know themselves. Heavy metal allowed them to see their own difficulties, and also functioned as company and support facing

challenges. Based on my own pre-understandings I have chosen theories that might explain some of the experiences expressed by my informants. Awareness around heavy metal's contexts, and the ability to reflect properly on emotional aspects evoked by it, might seem like the most important elements determining whether a positive or negative effect is attained from heavy metal. The presence of a music therapist in this process might create safe frames within which to explore, and also a therapeutic relationship with its benefits.

The small scale of this project makes its results insignificant. However I do hope it can serve as an eye opener concerning heavy metal and its potentials in music therapy. There is no doubt that the amount of research done on heavy metal's positive sides is very little, and that a better understanding of it demands more research and bigger scale projects. I hope this master thesis can inspire others to continue investigating heavy metal as a positive resource and to contribute in the demystification of a musical genre that in my opinion has more to it than the impression it gives.

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Attachments

Attachement 1

Informasjonsskriv til deltakere i mastergradsprosjekt

Foreløpig prosjekttittel:

Heavy metal as a music therapeutic resource (Heavy metal som en musikkterapeutisk ressurs).

Bakgrunn:

Jeg har siden tidlig ungdomstid opplevd at heavy metal kan ha positive effekter på meg selv. Da dette er et interessefelt for meg har jeg i forbindelse med mastergradsstudier i musikkterapi innhentet vitenskapelig informasjon om temaet. Dette ble gjort i en litteraturgjennomgang som viste at det finnes en del litteratur om heavy metals effekt på mennesker, men det meste av forskningen fokuserer på de negative effektene musikken kan ha. Da jeg opplever at det er manglende forskning på positive effekter av musikken har jeg valgt å undersøke dette nærmere.

I dette prosjektet vil jeg intervju flere personer som sier de har opplevd at heavy metal har gitt livene deres noe positivt. Intervjuene vil bli tatt opp med lydopptaker, for senere å bli transkribert (skrevet ned) og analysert.

All informasjon som innhentes vil bli anonymisert og informasjon som er personidentifiserbar vil bli endret eller slettet. Lydopptakene vil oppbevares forsvarlig for å unngå at de kommer på avveie.

Resultatet av dette prosjektet vil først og fremst være en masteroppgave. Videre er det mulighet for at prosjektet blir grunnlag for vitenskapelige artikler, muntlige presentasjoner og videre forskning. Oppgaven skrives på engelsk.

Kriterier for å delta i prosjektet:

Deltakelse i prosjektet innebærer at du møter opp til ett intervju som vil vare i ca 1 time. Tid og sted avtales nærmere med undertegnede.

Deltakelse er frivillig og du har rett til å trekke deg når som helst uten å oppgi grunn. Du kan også be om at informasjon om deg blir slettet. Ved spørsmål kan du når som helt ta kontakt på oppgitte epostadresse eller telefonnummer.

Doktorgradsstipendiat Lars Thuastad har ansvaret for veiledningen av dette prosjektet.

Med vennlig hilsen

Mikael Clavier
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Samtykkeerklæring for forskingsdeltakarane

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Foreløpig prosjektittel: Heavy metal as a music therapeutic resource (Heavy metal som en musikkterapeutisk ressurs)

Jeg har mottatt muntlig og skriftlig informasjon om prosjektet, og er villig til å delta på de vilkårene som er oppgitt om prosjektet. Samtykkeerklæringen innebærer at jeg godkjenner følgende punkt:

- Jeg samtykker i at det blir gjort intervju av meg og at dette kan brukes som datamateriale for forskingsprosjektet.
- Jeg samtykker i at deler av datamaterialet, som for eksempel utdrag fra intervjuet kan brukes i undervisningssammenheng.
- Jeg samtykker i at forskingsprosjektet og innsamlet datamateriale kan diskuteres med veileder Lars Thuastad og medstudenter i samme kull.
- Jeg samtykker i å ha fått tilstrekkelig og nødvendig informasjon om forskingsprosjektet, og har god forståelse av egen rolle og deltakelse i prosjektet.

Oppgaven skal være ferdig til 16. mai 2014. Da er prosjektet ansett som ferdig og datamateriale vil bli slettet. Masteroppgaven vil være tilgjengelig på Universitetet i Bergen for utlån. Alt datamateriale i masteroppgaven blir behandlet konfidensielt, og prosjektansvarlige er underlagt taushetsplikt. Personopplysninger i oppgaven blir anonymisert. Deltakelsen i forskingsprosjektet er frivillig og du har rett til å trekke deg når som helst uten å måtte grunngi dette.

Prosjektet er meldt til personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste AS.

.....
Stad

Dato

Underskrift



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Vår dato: 18.12.2013

Vår ref: 36531 / 2 / KH

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 05.12.2013. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

36531	<i>Heavy Metal as a music therapeutic resource</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	<i>Universitetet i Bergen, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
Daglig ansvarlig	<i>Lars Tuastad</i>
Student	<i>Mikael Clavier</i>

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 16.05.2014, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Kjersti Haugstvedt

Kontaktperson: Kjersti Haugstvedt tlf: 55 58 29 53

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Mikael Clavier mikaelclavier10@hotmail.com

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

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Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 36531

Utvalget består av personer over 16 år som opplever at heavy metal har en positiv effekt på seg selv.

Personvernombudet tar høyde for at det kan fremkomme sensitive opplysninger om helseforhold.

Prosjektslutt er 16.05.14. Alle data anonymiseres ved at verken direkte eller indirekte personidentifiserbare opplysninger fremgår. Lydopptak slettes. Indirekte personidentifiserbare opplysninger fjernes, omskrives eller grovkategoriseres.